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THE LOST GOVERNMENT

THE LOST GOVERNMENT

OR

DO YOU REALLY LIKE IT?

A Fairy Tale for Grown-ups

by

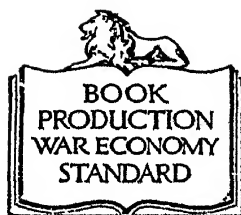
JIRI WEISS

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CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE UNSOLVED MYSTERY	9
II. THE MAN FROM THE MOUNTAINS	17
III. SIR ANDREW TRIES HARD	33
IV. THE PEOPLE	58
V. WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN LONDON	85
VI. THE EMISSARY	104
VII. THE MAN FROM ILLYRIA	130
VIII. FAILURE OF A MISSION	150
IX. STORM OVER ILLYRIA	171
X. THE BATTLE OF THE B.B.C. AND THE SIXTY-SIX PAPERS	188
XI. ENTER ANTONIO	208
XII. THE ROPE ON WHICH A MAN IS HUNG	225
XIII. MALVOLIO'S SECRET	235
XIV. THE LOST GOVERNMENT	255

TO MY FRIENDS HERE AND OVER THERE.

WARNING

Prefaces are superfluous, but a warning is sometimes necessary. This then is a warning to those who may desire to find in this book persons or events mirroring reality; they will be disappointed. Any similarity to reality in this book is purely coincidental: for how could one write a political novel in the middle of this war, of any war whatsoever? Even politicians—whose job it is—will blush (or should blush) when they read the speeches they uttered only three or four years ago. Fortunately for themselves they never do. A pity that we, so much affected by their deeds, do not either. For they speak in our name.

The story you are going to read is nothing but a fairy tale; a yarn spun on long evenings and rainy week-ends of 1942-3 when the conclusion of the war was still far away; a fairy tale with heroes and princesses, with magicians (preferably black) and dragons. With a happy ending, as fairy tales should have. And just as in a fairy tale, the blacks are black and the whites white. Besides, fairy tales are never seditious.

I am a Czech, and I have lived for almost six years in this country. There are exactly three translators from Czech into English; the choice before me was either to write in Czech and have the story translated—a difficult proposition for my publishers—or to write in English, have the manuscript corrected and put myself at the mercy of the reader. I have taken the second choice.

Besides thanking Dorothy Santer of Nicholson & Watson for so much encouragement and help, there only remains for the author to parody the immortal advice of the London Passenger Transport Board: Face the reader, raise your hand—and hope that he will understand.

J.W.

*Any similarity between persons or events
recorded in this story and reality must be
regarded as strictly coincidental.*

CHAPTER I

THE UNSOLVED MYSTERY

HUMAN beings have short memories. That is why History is full of unsolved mysteries which, though puzzling at the moment, slip more easily than one would believe into oblivion.

Even if later, perhaps, a possible or true explanation is found, it does not interest the public more than the solution of the cross-word puzzle in the issue of *The Times* of May 23rd, last year. And who is interested in last year's newspapers? A few cranks, the libraries, and maybe the historians of future times.

The World War II, which was finished by an Armistice more than ten years ago, is abundantly full of unsolved mysteries: Why did Adolf Hitler, at the height of his conquest, delay his stroke against Britain in the fateful summer of 1940? What was the reason for the sudden descent in Scotland of the Nazi Emissary, Rudolf Hess, a year afterwards? Who was the really guilty one at the fall of France? How did it happen that on the eve of an Allied attack on Africa, which became the prelude of their invasion of the Continent, a man like Darlan was put in charge of the liberated territory? We do not know. We have never been told, and even if we had been, would we still be interested?

Even now, ten years after Victory, life presents us with such a flood of unsolved mysteries of a similar kind that it seems difficult to concentrate on the solutions of the old ones; last year's cross-word puzzles, though unsolved, do not interest us much. It is a mistake understandable and explicable by the frailty of human life. It is true that he who has solved cross-word puzzles before finds it easier to tackle fresh ones; there is a pattern not only in history, but also in cross-word puzzles; in completely solving one of them, one can perhaps find a clue to those which follow.

This is the reason why this book has been written. The reader, engrossed in reports about Revolutions, Reparations, Retribution and Reconstruction might find a trend leading towards the present events

from one of those Unsolved Mysteries, which ten years ago threw up so much dust and used up so much headline-space all over the world. It is the Mystery of the Lost Illyrian Government.

Illyria, as the reader may remember, several times played quite an important part in the history of Europe, though the knowledge of its existence has been obscured by many more or less important writers and journalists who consider any country beyond the Rhine as some kind of Ruritania.

The notorious Mr. William Shakespeare, who planted in the British mind the notion that Bohemia, a Central European country, has a seashore—a fact that one certainly cannot rule out as increasing their ignorance during the fateful years which led to Munich—has disseminated similar tales about Illyria, thus distorting historical and geographical facts. Anglo-Illyrian relations date back into history and have grown to a considerable extent since the sixteenth century.

Mr. Shakespeare's story about shipwrecked twins called Viola and Sebastian has a historic foundation only in the fact that in 1588 two of Drake's ships—namely, the *Victory* and *St. George*—had to put into Port Sol, Illyria's capital at that time, after a severe brawl with the Venetians. It is true that after the two ships left the harbour the "shipwrecked" pair were found on the nearby beach; yet recent research has shown that the two ships returned safely to Portsmouth, and so the assumption that "beautiful" Viola was in reality an envoy of the British Secret Service might be regarded as very possible.

Whether her marriage to the then reigning Duke Orsino—which, according to Mr. Shakespeare, happened in such romantic circumstances, viz., serving in his Court as page in a male disguise, falling in love with the Duke, etc., etc.—was really due to great love or to the influence of British finance, remains an unrevealed mystery—just one more of them.

As the facts are, however, very soon after the wedding the British Chancellery granted to Illyria a loan of eight hundred thousand gold pieces—a very high sum for those times—and so the assumption that in the core of the sentimental fairy tale there is a hard coined truth might be regarded as fully justified.

As for her "twin brother" Sebastian, Duchess Viola managed to get him married to the richest heiress of that period—namely, to Olivia de Lenardo—and he proved himself an extremely able administrator, laying the foundations of Illyria's fleet, the development of which dated roughly into that period. It is not with-

out interest to compare the dates, for it might be taken for granted that the loan of the 800,000 ducats was granted by the English expressly for this purpose, with the ultimate interest of counterbalancing French, Genoan and Venetian naval power in the Mediterranean.

The Ducal family was considered the longest ruling House on the whole Continent, the Orsinos being in power for almost four centuries. Apart from the Habsburgs, they were the most prolific ruling family, Duchess Viola herself starting with a family of twelve—a tradition that has been kept ever since. Of course, throughout history many things have changed—even in the first Duchess Viola's lifetime things were not so rosy as Mr. Shakespeare has painted them. While Sebastian was building a position for himself, Duchess Viola was busy preparing the future for the Ducal family, and their initial friendship changed into rivalry relatively soon; this rivalry developed into a feud which was not mellowed by the ages as they passed.

With the industrial revolution the centre of gravity shifted from the ancient Port Sol to the modern capital of Oliville—"A Town Built Upon Iron Ore," as it was characterised by that American crack reporter, Gunter John.

Great wealth of iron ore of excellent quality under the town itself and in the near surroundings gave birth to a flourishing heavy industry. Throughout the nineteenth century foundries sprang up with chimneys rising like the pipes of a giant organ, writing Illyrian history of the last hundred years with their smoke. The House of Sebastian, deeply interested in trade and commerce, created Oliville practically alone, and the new factories and foundries were united in its strong hands.

Late in the nineteenth century they were centralised into one huge combine known throughout the world as Olivia Steel. The great economic power thus acquired was utilised to regain a great deal of the political influence lost in the past, and the Sebastians were often referred to as the Uncrowned Kings of Europe.

In an era of great continental wars a small country could not survive except by clever manœuvring. Thus, on a minor scale, Illyria played the old game of Balance of Power, throwing her weight from side to side between the would-be belligerents. Her policy was one of neutrality, and well she knew how to exploit it; her communications were built up into a veritable bridge between various countries. The mountains were tunnelled and freight rates lowered to such an extent that soon, at the turn of the century, about

one-third of European east-to-west traffic passed through Illyria's railways.

And so, when World War I came, all the continental powers had an interest in keeping her neutral. Just prior to the war, England enabled her to build up a small but efficient Navy; France armed her Army, and Germany built up her railways. Italy, always deficient in food, had an interest in her crop of maize and especially in the steel of excellent quality produced in the blast furnaces of Oliville.

The war had been a heavy blow to both French and German industries. The French had plenty of iron ore, but no coal necessary for its exploitation. The Germans had a over-production of coal with grave insufficiency of ores; here again Illyria stepped in.

Under the wise guidance of Baron Sebastian, whose son became Prime Minister after the rather stormy time in the 'thirties, an Illyrian National Bank was formed; purchases of iron ore were made in France, which were resold with but a small profit to Germany. Also, the German surplus of coal was bought and supplied to the French armament industry, which was gravely threatened by this deficit. So it happened that Illyria proved to be a great help to the economy and war-potential of both countries, which would have been unable to wage war efficiently without her, and thus Baron Sebastian could justly claim in Versailles to have saved the lives of millions of soldiers—as without his mediation the war would have dragged on for several more years.

Besides this service, Illyria rendered many others to the European Powers. Would it have been possible for them to build up without her shelter the magnificent Secret Service which sprang up in all countries during the First World War? Certainly not. The value of neutrals, as Duke Orsino said once in Paris during later years, consisted in being a bridge between the warring Powers. Nobody fulfilled this task with a greater zeal than Illyria, one of the few countries in Europe which emerged from the First Great War relatively unscathed. It was then not without justification that the leaders of the Illyrian ship of state could subscribe to a consistent policy of peace.

These well-known facts have been recapitulated only to ease understanding of the rather intricate history of the stormy years which followed the German occupation during World War II; these years have led to one of the strangest events of the immediate post-war period, namely, the departure of the Illyrian Government from Britain immediately after the conclusion of the armistice and the circumstances which accompanied it.

Here are the facts so far as they are publicly known:

It was a sunny morning, just before lunch, three days after the conclusion of the armistice, when the Illyrian Government assembled at Croydon airport. As a matter of fact, it was not only members of the Cabinet, for there was also the old Duchess Viola, a magnificent looking woman, wearing a black, old-fashioned dress, with a crown of white hair; Duke Orsino drove himself to the port in his white Rolls Royce; he did that much more for publicity's sake than for the fun of driving, because his eyesight was not very good and his nervous system highly strung. However, on a day like this, even newspapermen were milder than usual and so the Duke escaped their bitter wit.

He was in a good mood, and chatted with reporters while drinking his apéritif at the bar of the restaurant at the airport. Mr. Bradshaw, of the South-Eastern Division of the Foreign Office, then invited the guests for a lunch prepared in the Royal Suite; as a matter of fact, this lunch proved later to be their last lunch altogether—not only their last lunch in England, as Mr. Bradshaw said in his toast. Francis Hitchin, of the *Megaphone*, later mentioned that some members of the Government ate as if they knew that they would never be able to lunch again; but that, everybody was sure, was due only to understandable excitement. The speeches made during the lunch, together with the farewell greetings of the Foreign Office, were broadcast through the B.B.C. Overseas service.

While the lunch was in progress a huge CR 144 "Storm-eagle" six-engined bomber was being warmed up on the runway before the pavilion—a gift of the R.A.F. to the Illyrian Air Force. All military precautions usual in such cases were taken, as a matter of course. We have the testimony of Group Captain Cummings, testifying before a Court of State, that sentries had been posted all over the airport, and the Lord Provost and the Chief Commissioner of the London Police was personally present among the illustrious guests.

While the motors were warming up, one could hear even over their noise the thunderous applause greeting Duke Orsino's eloquent farewell to Britain together with a call for a New Europe. According to programme, exactly at quarter past two, Mr. Bradshaw took his guests out on to the runway where the Duke, his suite and the whole Government shook hands with Squadron Leader John Archibald, D.S.O., D.F.C. and bar, the first pilot of their bomber. While the newsreel cameras hummed, a B.B.C. microphone was carried towards the plane and the departing guests spoke a few moving farewells, repeating in a few phrases the content of Duke Orsino's toast.

Then, among flashes of photographic bulbs, the members of the Illyrian Government entered the 'plane, which was supposed to take them to their liberated country. While a military orchestra played the Illyrian national anthem, the huge bomber turned its camouflaged body towards the main runway, and very soon it was airborne. After having circled over the remaining party, the bomber took course south-east and soon disappeared among the cumulus clouds towering wall-like over the horizon.

The remaining company congratulated themselves on a beautiful farewell ceremony, definitely better than many of those they had attended in the last few days, when so many prominent guests had been leaving the British Isles. There was not the slightest hitch apparent in the whole of the arrangements, and as the time passed nobody dreamed of the tragedy which was pending.

The first sign of something not being in order came with a wireless call from Oliville, the capital of Illyria, asking for exact time of departure of the bomber. That was at half-past five, when it was supposed that the bomber should be well within sight of the capital. The meteorological reports were not very good, but so far the bomber had been reported by various goniometrical stations with which it had been in contact.

About six p.m., however, Oliville called again, reporting that there was still no trace of the ducal 'plane and that there was considerable disquiet in the capital regarding its fate. Since its last contact with Station Berne, Switzerland, the radio of the bomber had remained silent, and so, as the night came, it seemed that the worst fears were realised. Oliville reported that search parties had been organised all over the country; the gendarmerie and police of all countries on the route of the bomber were informed and prepared similar measures.

The search went on through the night, but not until next morning was the 'plane found. It had crashed well within Illyria, about twenty miles inside her frontier, in a lonely mountain valley—in the district of Vargal, famous for the stand of General Lehman, leader of the partisans during the war.

The astounding fact was that the huge 'plane was almost intact, which was almost a miracle if one took into consideration the narrow gorge and the huge span of the 'plane's wings. This miracle was due to the excellent piloting of Squadron Leader Archibald, who was soon discovered in a pig-sty in a nearby settlement, guarded by three local peasants who had mistaken him in their zeal for a German pilot.

After being immediately flown to Oliville, he was hastily cross-

questioned about the fate of his passengers and his ship. There was no British Ambassador in Oliville at that time, and therefore the questioning took place at the house of the President of the Illyrian Provisory State Council; later, the statements were corroborated at a British court martial. The facts deposed by Squadron Leader Archibald were roughly these:

Very soon after the contact with Berne, the ship got into a violent electric storm and as visibility was almost nil because of hail, the pilot tried to get above the storm; in this he had almost succeeded, when lightning struck the machine and put the electric system out of action. Also the wireless transmitter was destroyed, and the wireless operator stunned by the impact. Except for this slight casualty, everybody remained unscathed.

The situation was, however, extremely dangerous. The plug system being out of action, all the engines of the ship were dead; and with the bad visibility it was highly questionable whether a landing among the mountains was possible. In order to save his passengers and crew, the skipper therefore gave the order to abandon ship.

As they had considerable height, everything was done without undue haste, and the second pilot saw to it that all parachutes were properly adjusted. By that time the aircraft had dipped into the upper layer of the storm clouds and Squadron Leader Archibald thought it high time to give the order to jump. The passengers jumped without panic, and were followed by the crew of three. Archibald remained last, and just when he was preparing to jump for it the aircraft extricated herself from the cloud and fell into a clear patch.

Bearing in mind that his ship was a gift of the R.A.F. to the Illyrian Air Force, Squadron Leader Archibald immediately decided to try a landing, in which, by his supreme skill, he almost succeeded. However, the narrow gorge was not much of a landing ground and so the machine was damaged. Immediately after landing he was captured by dangerous looking individuals without uniforms, with whom all parley proved impossible. The only thing to be done was to put his hands up and walk behind the guide to the above-mentioned pig-sty, which he did. That was all he knew.

The President of the Illyrian Provisory Council apologised a thousand times for this unworthy treatment and thanked him for his courage. Subsequently, Squadron Leader Archibald and his crew, who in the meantime were discovered one by one in the mountains,

were flown to London. The crew could but corroborate their skipper's statement.

While these inquiries were proceeding, military and civil search parties were carrying on investigations as to the fate of Duke Orsino and his whole Government. Three whole days and nights investigation was carried out—certainly not an easy task in the chaos of those post-war days when the angry populace had so many bills to settle, but not a trace of the illustrious passengers was discovered. For a full month afterwards authorities, local bodies and hundreds of eager volunteers searched literally every square yard of the Vargal district, but the Ducal party proved unfindable and nothing was ever heard of them.

It was uncanny. It was as if they had dissolved immediately after jumping into thin air.

For a time the sudden disappearance of the whole of the Illyrian Government was a sensation for the world and a subject of much speculation. Politicians, reporters, newsmen, photographers, broadcasters, all poured into Illyria, walked in the districts concerned, took photographs of the inhabitants. A huge film company even tried to get Squadron Leader Archibald as a star for their next production, called "Squadron Leader X."

The pilot, however, wisely refused, and the company chose a well-known star for the part, who carried it out with the usual success.

For a few weeks the B.B.C., N.B.C., C.B.S., and other broadcasting companies were broadcasting daily reports about how the search was getting on, but as all investigation remained without result, the public began to lose interest. One by one the broadcasters and the reporters disappeared, for there were many other sensations well worth recording all over the continent. Soon the whole thing wandered into the files of Scotland Yard and all other police archives throughout the world, where slumber so many other unrevealed mysteries.

As a matter of fact, the world went on rotating in its heavenly orbit, and the solar system continued to surge like an uncanny express somewhere through space around the hypothetical axis of the Milky Way; the Illyrian people held general elections two months later, and, as is known, they changed their constitution and Illyria became a Republic. That much we know from the newspapers.

There might be, however, the possibility of tracking down the chain of events which led to this strange drama; this might reveal the clue which should lead us to a rational explanation. One mystery stands for the whole lot. If we uncover one of them, it is much easier to

find out about the other ones. That's the reason why there is so much unwillingness to reveal even the smallest of them.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN FROM THE MOUNTAINS

THE night was starlit and calm. Under the serene gaze of the moon chewing a golden cloud like a gigantic piece of cake, the black silhouettes of the fir-trees stuck against the sky, a maze of upraised hands summoning the very heavens to help. It was as if the tortured earth itself was calling out in unbearable pain. Illyrian earth occupied by the victorious German armies.

A bad night for an escape, thought Igor, walking closely to the tree-line, where the shadow was thick in its velvety darkness. But we could not wait. We have been holding out for so long.

The northern horizon was darkened by the silent wall of the mountains. Another cloud, silvery and soft, pierced by two big stars, was hovering over one of the peaks like a tattered flag. Yes, our flag is tattered, thought Igor, tattered by two years of warfare. Two years of slow, creeping mountain warfare, of touch and go, of fierce raids, of no less fierce punishing expeditions by the conqueror. Nine divisions were engaged in the mopping-up operations, but the guerillas knew every inch of ground in the mountains and played hide and seek with their enemies. Still, time told severely; replacements of equipment and man-power, of stores and precious ammunition were almost impossible.

A cold wind shook the birches on a clearing so that their leaves fell like a pouring stream of silver coins. Yes, soon it would be winter, thought Igor. The Germans would be living in the towns with houses and fireplaces, windows and blankets; that was better than the holes and tents of their own men, who had to withstand the snowstorms and the hail in the scanty shelter of mountain valleys and ravines. It was nice to listen to foreign wireless reports and hear almost nightly praise of their courageous resistance, thought Igor. How good that almost nobody in the whole guerilla army understood what was said on the air; they fought with the rather thoughtless tenacity of simple men who have nothing to lose. Their faith in ultimate victory would not cease until the last drop of blood

had stopped circling in their veins. What else was left to them but to believe and fight?

But General Lehman, their leader, knew better. He was an old fighter, he was. As a young officer he studied in the Imperial Military Academy; he knew that war was run on simple mathematics with only one unknown. That unknown, the human element, was fortunately well known in his equation; otherwise he would have to give up; but as it was, he knew that without help from outside they would be doomed within six or ten months. Doomed, mark you, as a cohesive military force capable of action.

A sudden onslaught of wind interrupted Igor's thoughts: Yes, soon now he would reach the line where the forests ended—and with them the power of the guerillas. Down there, in the silence of the valley, was the enemy, with his system of strong points thrown like a web over the whole of his country.

It was a hundred and twenty miles to the capital, he thought. A hundred and twenty miles covered by meshes of the invisible net. Still, one had to slip through, somehow. Others did. Igor would, too. He figured nervously the small container hanging on his chest, under the rough texture of his peasant shirt.

Within the capsule, tightly folded, were notes and letters in code; before he left, he had memorised a great many facts, but still, some notes were necessary. The capsule was small and could be swallowed without difficulty. This was less risky than the usual way of hiding letters within double heels or the padding of one's coat. Opening a man's belly was more difficult than the ripping open of the hem of his coat. A considerable sum in Leva notes was hidden under the lining of his coat. He knew the address in Oliville at which the money was to be delivered.

The enemy was cunning. Six weeks ago they captured Velinsky. Good old Velinsky, with his porcelain pipe and the pointed belly which he liked to fill with the aromatic wine of the hills. He, too, had gone away to contact help from abroad. Six weeks later his naked body hung from a gallows in the main square. It was said that the body was almost unrecognisable; most probably they tried to extract the required information by applying rather unpleasant methods; it was doubtful whether Velinsky was able to keep quiet about all he knew.

There are limits to what a man can stand. No more porcelain pipe, no more smiles over a good, full glass of golden-red wine. A corpse hanging from a gallows on a busy square.

It is said that people went past uncovering their heads until they

were stopped. My people. Illyria. A wave of warm feeling swept Igor like a torrent. His lungs were bursting with a sob; he forced it down.

I am getting crazy, he thought. Over-excitement, most probably, and under-feeding. Bad combination. Maybe also the result of smoking dried potato leaves. I have been a chain-smoker all my life and it seems difficult to give up that habit now. Velinsky was the secretary of the Liberal Party. We have often disagreed but, when the fight began, he showed himself a man. Funny, only three years ago there was a campaign against him in the *Illyrian Freedom*, of which Igor Duval had been the editor. He had risen like a meteor from an obscure newsman to Editor-in-Chief.

A good paper it was, half a million a day. Not bad for a small country. Velinsky had been advocating collaboration with the Agrarian Party and a Coalition was formed; this had made him a target for the sharp pens and cartoonists of the *Illyrian Freedom*, under Igor's personal guidance. The censorship of General Sebastian's Press Department was strict indeed, and the *Freedom* had been full of white blue-pencilled spaces. In spite of this, though one would never have guessed it, the two men became close friends. Velinsky, though much older than Igor, was a good fighter, and had been in many a scrap.

The guerilla's greatest worry was supplies. While below there in the plain there was heavy industry, foundries and factories, up in the hills, which gave them protection, there was almost no industry worth mentioning. A few shops had been improvised with tools smuggled from the south, but it was ridiculously little when compared with the burning need of an army numbering well over five divisions dispersed over scarcely populated barren hills and thickly wooded valleys. Timber was the only raw material in abundance—but from timber to nitro-cellulose it is a long way indeed.

Velinsky's job was to organise more support from the clandestine organisations down there in the plain. He had proved himself an able organiser, though from the military point of view he was not the best man. Still, there was "Papa" Lehman, who distrusted all newspaper men, among whom he also included Igor. True, in these last two years of fighting and hardship many of those whom he had called, often contemptuously, 'scribblers and dabblers,' proved themselves excellent soldiers in the end, but still the General's conservative education could not make him forget Igor's rather radical tinge.

Velinsky was a good, honest administrator. Old Lehman liked him and thought that the job would benefit by his conspicuous

face, which looked like that of a rich peasant. Possibly he was right; Velinsky went—and now he was gone.

The forest ends in thick undergrowth and soon we will get into the valley. Soon, too, there will be the first enemy to be faced, and then we will see how much a newspaperman is worth. It wasn't the first time that Igor had been behind the enemy lines, but never yet had he gone alone. For almost two years he had been living among the most exciting scoops without any possibility of printing them; three years ago, if somebody had told him that he would be stalking German sentries at night, he would have laughed in his face: There is rheumatism in my joints, he would have said, and I have had pneumonia twice. Besides, I wouldn't kill a man, I couldn't.

Well, one has killed a lot. And one has been missed by pneumonia.

And though a former scribbler, one had been elevated to the command of a small detachment of scouts before taking over staff work. 'Papa' Lehman distrusted the 'Intelligentsia' with the profound distrust of a peasant.

His father had been an illiterate ox-driver on a squire's estate down in the plain, and 'Papa' never forgot his origin. When excited—and that was rarely—he fell back to the broad brogue of his youth and did not mind who was listening.

He liked to smoke a long pipe with a porcelain head with deer painted on it, the favourite pipe of the peasants. He did not mind appearing with his pipe in public, and several times it happened that he took the accordion out of the hands of an N.C.O. or a private, when there was a dance somewhere, and played simple tunes, joining in the singing with his falsetto voice; nobody minded that he wasn't able to stick to an air for more than two seconds.

The peasants, who formed the majority of the regular peacetime army, adored him—and now, in the hills, he was their 'father.' Nobody called him anything but 'Papa,' and before getting on one had to show one's worth. Igor did that.

How much I have changed, Igor reflected, and hoped that his peasant disguise would hold. Life in the mountains had made his hands hard and his face was covered by a beard. Not that he liked it, but the beard was warm in winter and there were no blades to be got, not to speak of the water which was icy cold. Igor hated shaving in cold water; better to grow a beard. He did. It was quite good for this peasant make-believe. But still, the best disguise was not to be detected at all.

Igor crouched at the first fir-tree which was braving the night

zephyr as the lonely outpost of the armies of the forest. The sky was getting green in the East. How long had he been walking? Let us see: five, six, seven hours. The last part of the trip he had to cover alone and yet he had not lost his way. Not too bad for a journalist. Of course, there was the small map which Donath had given him, but one couldn't see it in the dark anyway.

When arriving at the meeting place where he was to be picked up by the escort, the map must be destroyed. He pulled the paper out of his pocket and tried to see the drawing in the greyish light of the oncoming morning; soon it would be dawn. The escort was bound to be at the meeting place, if everything went well. He wondered who would be his escort.

"The less you know the better," said 'Papa' Lehman in their last conversation. "I have instructed Donath to pass the news of your arrival to the appropriate contacts and they'll shepherd you all right. Besides the way you will be going, there are six other lines of communication; as long as they exist, we can breathe. When the war ends I promise you priority for this scoop. But I trust that what you see or hear you will keep to yourself. Human lives are in your hands. Don't forget it."

In spite of being an officer of long experience, General Lehman had all the features of a schoolmaster. He always treated his entourage like a lot of little boys and never minded to whom he spoke.

At the first big manœuvres which Igor attended, Duke Orsino had made a long speech to the General Staff. The Duke liked to see himself as an amateur strategist. 'Papa' Lehman, who was then in command of the Third Army Corps, stepped forward and said in his matter-of-fact voice that from the Duke's speech it was evident exactly how much knowledge of military science His Highness possessed. His face was impenetrable as he said this, and the Duke retreated quickly, not without frowning as he left the conference, and never forgave this insult of the old soldier, who as a result of this encounter never rose above the rank he then held.

Even when saying goodbye to a man whom he never might see again, the General did not show his thoughts. Only his handshake was somehow warmer and longer than usual, and as Igor passed through the door of the hut, he patted his back with the flat of his hand, saying, "Don't worry, you'll get through."

Donath was just the other way: gay, talkative, full of stories and jokes, he was known for his extremely emotional character. Though he spoke a lot, he could be as silent as a fish when it came to con-

fidential matters and, in spite of his outward moods, he was as tough as was necessary for his position.

"Well," said Donath, running his hand through his curly wool-like hair, "we'll give you a nice lesson to memorise. A bore, but necessary."

With infinite patience, which Igor would have never looked for in the rather burly man, he went over with him all the addresses and paroles which he considered necessary for this journey; he did not know all the facts about the contacts, and he did not tell Igor half of the things he knew. But still, if something should go wrong, Igor had to know addresses where another contact could be found. A small map was drawn by Donath himself, indicating the barn where he would be picked up by the first escort.

It was already night when he left Donath's office, and the officer accompanied him to the small group of scouts waiting outside the building. A handshake, and he was gone; a long trek followed, until they reached the place where Igor was to part from his men. He had plenty of time to think while he walked alone.

Now it was already getting light. Down in the valley the mist is boiling in huge chunks, while Igor destroys the little map. Suddenly, out of the mist, emerges the figure of a woman, walking slowly up the narrow path shining in the grey grass with the white of loose-trodden limestone. She passes, disappearing around the corner of the undergrowth. Igor follows, peering into the grey morning which is descending slowly down the slopes.

The situation is worthy of a penny novelette, thinks Igor. We would have refused publication had anybody dared to bring us such stuff; we were a serious paper. We were. Look, there is the barn; Donath had described it well indeed, and he warned Igor to keep a good lookout for the Nazis; sometimes their patrols would set traps for peasants trying to join the guerillas. Yet there is no enemy in sight. Probably they are huddled in bed. Maybe they will even get their breakfast in the bed, and a bath afterwards, with hot water.

Still, here we are at the barn. Igor opens the door. The escort is there all right. It is the woman who has been ascending the slope; she does not look too friendly, with her scythe, and Igor tries to behave as nonchalantly as possible.

"Good morning," he says, and the woman watches every one of his movements. Seems quite keen to hit out with her scythe, thinks Igor under her gaze. Then: "I am a stranger here."

That's the password. She is still suspicious: "Where are you

going?" Reply: "I am going forward." Correct, isn't it? We used to play like this when we were boys. Now it's serious. Funny.

The woman drops her scythe and turns around, fingers in her basket. There is a leather flask full of goat milk, a piece of oat bread, a chunk of cheese. Her eyes are still full of mistrust as she gives the lot to Igor: "There, eat."

Igor ate. Seven hours of brisk walk through the mountain night, the tenseness of constant watch, the danger possibly lurking among the silent trees, all that had made him hungry. While he ate, the woman watched him carefully. She does not look badly, with her square shoulders and firm naked legs protruding out of her short petticoat. A long time since Igor had a woman; his eyes must have been hungrier than his mouth, because the woman blushed and pulled her bare legs under her body. In spite of this, they both felt much better; the tension having slackened and Igor having finished his meal, the woman went straight to business.

She had a warm though hesitating voice, with the soft accent of the peasants of the hills: three weeks ago, the Silver Shirts and the Germans came for her husband, and since then she had not heard of him. The Germans had increased their patrols and it was impossible to move about. Several arrests had been made.

Velinsky, thought Igor instantly. The poor man must have spoken. Probably he must have given them a hint about the communications running through the valley, for the Nazis had laid a strong cordon and were checking the identity of everybody they got hold of. She had been here already twice during the night, in order to warn Igor and to hide him for two or three days, until their attention slackened a bit.

What a woman, thought Igor. Good strong breasts she has, too. How did she know about his arrival? Ian had told her. She had simply taken over the job her husband did. With all the duties. She'd hide Igor all right, in the cottage of her aunt. He would be safe there, safer than anywhere else. He would see why when he got there.

The woman was getting up; how good it was to have a drink of that milk. It was already light, and the sun had penetrated the mist mounting from the valley like smoke from a leisurely chimney. The woman's strong, white legs were walking in front of Igor. Evidently she knew every square yard of the territory; dew glittered in the rays of the morning sun and the air was thrilled by a million rain-bows. Igor sniffed the humid, moist smell and the impact was so strong that he almost forgot that every second could bring punishment

worse than death. At the moment the menace seemed as unreal as if it were all happening in another, different life. In another world altogether.

Downhill they went, through a thin wood of young birches, the white trunks of which slashed the morning like so many silvery swords. Then, after passing a small clearing, they dived into a thick hazel growth. There was a narrow footpath among the bushes, leading into the valley. He heard the rustling of the parted twigs and saw the bare legs of the woman in front of him. She stepped on, seemingly unperturbed, yet alert. Her movements were outspoken in that from her stride one could judge what went on in her mind.

Among the bushes there stood a small cottage with yellow sunflowers shining from over the low fence. They approached it from the back, treading carefully so as not to make any noise. A dog whined as they approached, but at the woman's gentle order it immediately approached, wagging its tail and sniffing eagerly at Igor's pocket, where there was a crumb of bread given to him by the woman. As he pulled it out in order to give it to the dog, she turned and spoke up for the first time since their conversation in the barn: "I'd better eat it myself," she said with a harsh voice, "bread is too good for a dog."

As Igor saw her strong white teeth bite into the closely baked dark bread, he knew that she must have been ravenously hungry while he was eating her rations for one day or maybe more. He was ashamed and wanted to say something, but she put her broad, square hand on his mouth and simultaneously opened a low gate, leading into the cellar.

They tiptoed down the stairs, which had an echo like a church-vault, and as they arrived at the bottom, Igor beheld a camp-bed and a few primitive implements. He knew that this would be the place of his stay during the next couple of days. The woman stopped. "There. You will be safe here, my aunt is an old woman; she is blind, and there are two Germans quartered in this cottage. I come once a day to see to the household and I will see to you too. You must not leave this cellar under any circumstances and during the day you'd better sleep or lie still. Good-bye."

The door squeaked on its hinges, and she was gone. A tiny oil-lamp, such as the peasants use during their mourning period, shed an uncertain light with shadows flickering ghost-like through the eerie air of this hide-out. It was a small cave dug into the soft limestone of the hills. A black crucifix had been stuck over the bed, and in a wooden box adorned with peasant ornaments—small hearts

and apples—he found a small plate with cold potatoes, a piece of bread and a jug of sour milk.

Just as he settled down on the bed after his exploratory trip around, he suddenly heard a rhythmic sound. Taptap, taptap, it went, somewhere in the hut on top of the cellar, and it stopped as suddenly as it begun. After a moment of tense waiting, Igor heard the taptap again, this time going in the reverse direction, and it was not until then that he realised that it was the blind woman in the cottage, probably preparing breakfast for the German soldiers quartered with her.

Lying on the bed, he listened to the noises which penetrated clearly through the resonant ceiling of his prison. He heard a loud yawn, a curse in German, the creaking of a bed under the impact of a heavy body stretching itself. Taptap, taptap, came the steps, and a German voice, quite agreeable, thanked her politely for the coffee.

They are having coffee in bed, the bastards, thought Igor, now there is silence, they are drinking it, our people have not seen coffee since the occupation; surely these brigands have their own stores from France. A yawn, and leisurely steps walking away. Now he whistles, he must be washing, and the other one wants to go on sleeping. They shout at each other, and the poor blind woman taptaps into the kitchen or somewhere where she can hide herself. Now they have taken their shoes, bang, bang, and they are going.

The door slammed, and there was silence in the house. Nothing moved, and Igor had the unpleasant feeling of being alone in a cathedral where every movement creates a thousandfold echo. The little oil-light flickered, and the shadows danced all over the room, they seemed to assume faces, grimaces, become phantoms. One lies still, and one thinks of the past.

This war has blown into human beings like a storm into desert sand. Here I am, dreamed Igor, a grain of sand blown hither and thither, at the mercy of that peasant woman, with a few papers which are my death warrant if they are found on me. And yet, would I have said it, would I have believed it only a couple of years ago? Igor was among those who foresaw the European storm ten years ago, when the first symptoms appeared. But even he could not imagine. How could one? Five years before the invasion, just after he became editor of his paper, he married Sylvia.

Sylvia, Sylvia, that name feels as if one's heart were throbbing into eternity in that rhythm. She had narrow, long slit eyes of greenish colour, ashblonde hair and in spring and summer used to be tanned

the colour of an Indian. Her hands were always cool, but the muscles were strong and hardened

That flat we had together, with those African statuettes I brought from Tetuan; true, Firdus said that they were not genuine, but, after all, Art Editors are apt to be highbrow without knowing much of their stuff anyway. We believed them to be genuine, and we refused to be shaken. It's a pity that it was impossible to enjoy those days and nights more. She used to curl her limbs around me and, when she slept, her mouth was open a little bit, showing the rim of her teeth. If I arrived late, which I usually did, Sylvia used to say, "See you to-morrow," and continue to sleep. When I left early in the morning, she did not open her eyes, but said, "See you to-night, I hope," and turned the other way like a warm marmoset. Why the dickens didn't I stay more at home? There wasn't time, said Igor to himself.

Time marches on, it must be caught while it is here. Newspapers are here for this purpose, they catch, fry, filter, fix, chop the time escaping ever again and again. There was no time. Fascism was marching, in Italy, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Greece, Illyria. Ever since the suppression of the Great Strike in 1931, the situation in Illyria was dangerous, especially since the assumption by General Sebastian of the Prime Minister's Seat, defying openly the elected Parliament. He was a clever player, he was.

Igor and he could look back on a decade of continuous struggle. Igor had been a young reporter then, covering the riots. He happened to be in St. Paul's, the workers' settlement, when a detachment of gendarmerie and regular troops besieged the strikers in their tenements. Though a great many of his despatches had been confiscated, what passed sufficed; besides, Reuter and other international agencies diffused them all over the world, much to the annoyance of the General; they helped to rally the opposition parties into a Popular Front which obstructed Sebastian's half-baked dictatorship.

For a time, they had the support of the Duke Orsino, who resented very much the way Sebastian pushed him away. It was due to his influence that Igor was released from the prison where Sebastian had put him after the suppression of the riot. That had made Igor popular overnight.

Every evil has a good side to it, thought Igor, lying on his back and looking on the flickering pattern thrown on the ceiling by the unsteady flame of the lamp. Even the breakdown of our country has given us something. Unity. Though it took time to forge. His thoughts flashed back to that night when he first heard of the on-

coming crisis. The wires were humming days in advance with unconfirmed rumours about a pending German move to the South. The preventive censorship of all news services established by the Prime Minister, General Sebastian, had indeed prevented the people from knowing anything about the preparations of the enemy. It had come like lightning.

Igor thought of the last press conference at the marble hall of the Chancellery and of Sebastian, sucking, as was his custom, lemon squash through a long straw. His long white fingers seemed to twitch with nervousness; he broke the straw and crumpled it between thumb and first finger, split it with his nail into tiny strands before replacing it by another one, which soon met with its predecessor's fate. At the news of the invasion, the Prime Minister invited all editors to a lightning conference; it was about midnight, and Igor remembered how deserted the streets were. Oliville slept peacefully, not knowing that the enemy's tanks were already gnawing at the frontier passes. It was a memorable conference, and Igor would never forget the ominous quiet of the marble hall with the golden chandelier hanging from the ceiling like a great octopus—or, better still, like a cluster of twisted, glistening question-marks fraught with disaster.

As he entered, almost everybody was already present and he remembered how there was a small group around the Nestor of the newsmen, old Costeanu. His white mane—not for nothing did they call him the Illyrian Lloyd George—was caught in a reflection from a splendid Venetian mirror as in an aureole of light, and the lock of white hair moved up and down as his head shook in passionate whisper. When the Prime Minister entered, Costeanu's gaze turned towards the ebony writing desk and in the stillness of the hall one could hear his last remark, "Here comes Judas!" His last public remark, indeed, for ten days later he was dead.

Nobody but history knew what had happened at the preceding Cabinet meeting. There had been many rumours later on, but Igor knew that not one of them could be considered to be what in the news world is called 'confirmed.' But there, before the gaze of the assembly, the Prime Minister stood, haggard and thin, his well-groomed hair sticking closely to his oblong head, his thin, long fingers grasping the first piece of straw, and his dry, husky voice well collected. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have a severe blow for you. This evening, at eleven-thirty to be precise, the German Government sent me by its Ambassador the following note"—he read the text of the paper, well known from the Blue Book published since; it was the ultimatum, expiring in two hours.

Igor remembered how, with an almost comic simultaneousness, the whole audience looked at their watches, though there was the huge, white disc of an electric clock right in front of them. Even he himself could not resist looking at his watch, given to him by Sylvia: It was exactly half-past one—the ultimatum had already expired.

“Gentlemen,” said the Prime Minister, “you can see from the time, that this country has already passed into a state of war with the German Reich, and the Cabinet, under the guidance of His Highness the Duke Orsino XV, has already ordered general mobilisation, which is being broadcast now.”

General mobilisation by wireless, thought Igor, for the first time in history there is such a thing. The events of that night unrolled in his memory like a well-edited talkie: the crowd of usually sceptical editors singing the anthem, shouting and cheering, as the Prime Minister declared that the Illyrian Army and Navy would resist to its last drop of blood, the black-coated figure of General Sebastian slipping out as if it were without weight, the stout figure of old Costeanu walking in front of the whole audience to the ebony desk, pointing out the row of broken straws beside the half drunk glass of lemon squash and exclaiming into the enthusiastic noise: “For him we are just like those. Like straw. Straw, I am telling you!”

Nobody listened to him at this moment. The hall was full of speculation, eager and angry voices, boasts and questions, full of reflection and light, while through the huge windows there came the noise of a huge crowd, massing in the streets, marching under the Renaissance Arcade of Triumph towards the Ducal Palace under the greying skies of the morning. What a night that was, the crowds, the shouts, the singing. How easy everything seemed, what a fool’s paradise that was; but paradise, indeed; even a newsman’s heart was full of a strange feeling, of a devotion and love, yes, you may call this patriotism; in such moments one doesn’t need to feel ashamed even when tears are rolling down one’s cheek. Yes, and then came the morning after.

What did the poor peasants know about the mechanised might of the German armies? Only what they were permitted to know by their leaders. The army, under the supreme command of General Curio, did not fight badly. But they were not prepared for this kind of war, for the lightning pincer movement cutting the lower Var in three thrusts between Port Sol and the capital. It was all over in three days.

How and why, well, perhaps General Sebastian would know.

How and why the German High Command knew so well the disposal of Illyria's military forces that they could deploy their own with the utmost economy; why the Illyrian fleet, under command of Admiral Antonio, never left the harbour; why the great Olivia Combine and the huge railway yards were never bombed; why . . . Well, never mind.

Three days later, Illyria collapsed. And suddenly, in the moment of supreme crisis, there emerged from everywhere groups of men in Silver Shirts, from General Sebastian's patriotic organisation called the 'Flag.'

What an afternoon that was! Defeat hung over the town like a dark cloud. There were whispers that the Germans had occupied Port Sol; that the Duke had abdicated and already left the country; that General Sebastian had committed suicide or that he had sold all military secrets to the Germans; that the Illyrian Navy had been handed over to the Germans intact—or that it had scuttled itself; that Admiral Antonio had been made prisoner in his palace at Port Sol and that he was now in Egypt with the British—these and yet more fantastic rumours swept the capital like gusts of a stormy wind, one quickly following the other.

But to anybody's trained eyes it must have been clear which way things were going: there were the Silver Shirts collecting themselves in small groups, there were the loudspeakers being mounted on every lamp-post in the street, there were the silent nights when bombs should have been whistling down and nothing happened.

Igor knew that the end was near and yet (against his own reason) could not believe it. After the initial panic, the capital settled down to a strange hectic apathy, the apathy of the lame in a crisis, with a feverish mind and an impotent body.

That afternoon Sylvia came into Igor's office, much against her usual practice. Igor had wanted it, their flat was not safe with the Fascists walking in the streets. It was strange how many of these men seemed free of military service. From everywhere, it seemed, thronged troops of young men in high boots, giving the Fascist salute. The police stood and watched, without interfering.

Sylvia switched on the wireless; there was nothing to get but Viennese waltzes on gramophone records. One waltz followed the other, while the sound of jeering and cheering alternated down in the square. Igor went into the news room, but there wasn't any news. The telephones were silent, the stenographers standing by like a bunch of flags hanging on their poles in want of a fresh breeze.

Since the usual military communiqué in the morning, the town

seemed to be cut off from the rest of the world; the radio was the one link. Igor saw himself again that fateful day, fishing for bits of news in the ether crackling with contradictory messages. At last one of the tickers sprang to life. What a cluster of faces over its clicking letter-board! It was as if fate itself was personified in the rhythmical, inexorable ticking, methodically registering the fate of millions of human beings on a narrow strip of paper.

GENERAL SEBASTIAN FLIES TO BERLIN, clicked the apparatus. The letters seemed to flicker in the uncertain light like so many distinct flames. THIS AFTERNOON AN ARMISTICE HAS BEEN SIGNED BY ADMIRAL ANTONIO, continued the ticker, with a dry cough. FIGHTING CEASED PRECISELY AT 4 P.M. The wireless set didn't seem to worry about this news. It accompanied the deadly rhythm of the ticker with a gay waltz. But suddenly the melody was interrupted, halfway through a melodious passage. Instead of the fiddles, a throaty voice, harsh with nervousness, announced that everybody should stand by their sets; an important announcement would be broadcast in a minute or two.

Sylvia brushed back her hair. Her eyes were narrow and on her temples were small drops of perspiration. A bunch of silent people sat around the hushed office, even the ground noise of the amplifier holding its breath. Suddenly, without any preparation, a German voice chipped in, quite casually; one of the engineers in the relay service probably had forgotten that the microphone was alive. He tested the line: "Kollwitz, hoerst du mich? Eins, zwei, drei, vier, fuenf . . .

He counted twice before the reply came. Then, with a sharp click, a weak voice, as if speaking from the depth of a well, moaned: "The Prime Minister, General Sebastian, wishes to make an important announcement. General Sebastian." A cough, and then they heard Sebastian's voice.

It was spruce and crisp, though Igor's ear could detect a shadow of tiredness.

"This morning," said the crisp voice, "His Highness the Duke Orsino abdicated. The Cabinet, with myself at its head, have taken over the direction of our beloved fatherland. As the military situation was hopeless, I appealed to the Leader of the German Reich for clemency. My prayers have been graciously listened to. In the name of the Illyrian people," continued the crisp voice, "I have today signed an agreement with the Chancellor and Fuehrer of the German Reich, Adolf Hitler. To end the needless slaughter . . ."

Bunk. Treason. Everything was settled before the war started. Everything had been settled the summer before, when Goering had been General Sebastian's guest. Everything was settled during the General Strike. "We are a small country," continued the voice, "and our military honour has been satisfied."

Military honour, thought Igor. That means, giving in to Hitler. He saw the General, as he had seen him many times before, with his simple uniform, his long, white hands, leaning slightly over the microphone. These long white fingers were like the claws of a bird of prey.

"I have spoken to the German Fuehrer as soldier to soldier," continued the voice on the wireless with a slight tremor. Igor did not listen any more. He went mechanically to his room and started clearing his desk.

There were many papers he wanted to clear away while there was time. Sylvia followed him, and lit a cigarette sitting on the edge of his desk. "I'll help you," she said drily. "They will be here at the latest within one hour." As she said this, she did not know that the German army was actually going to occupy the country; she knew that in any case the time of the Silver Shirts had come. He opened the safe in the corner of the room and started to skim through his confidential papers.

While he glanced through the lines, he heard Sylvia striking her match. He started tearing the papers. The rustling of flames in the stove seemed to submerge any other sound, even the voice of the loudspeakers, penetrating the doors and the wall panels.

Now the fire started to burn in earnest. File after file of material wandered into the flames. They squatted at the open door of the stove like two children and watched the dancing ornaments of flame. A typewritten page crumbled like a broken fist and a few lines smouldered out red hot as if written in blood. The draught whistled in the chimney and Igor discovered in himself an amazing sensitivity to sound and colour.

In such instants one's soul changes into cinefilm, registering not only movement, but odours, colours, moods, maybe the passing of time itself. Outside, in the street, there suddenly boomed a voice: "Citizens, keep calm and quiet! An armistice has just been signed between the Greater German Reich and General Sebastian in his office as the Prime Minister of Illyria. The German Army is moving to occupy Oliville. Keep order. Order. Police will be maintaining order. All public services will go on as usual. Factories to be closed at once. A curfew . . ."

Igor had often thought that it might happen. Yet when he listened, he felt like a man swept off his feet by an avalanche. Sylvia had herself completely in hand. She knew that from now on things would happen at break-neck speed. She slammed the door of the stove, pulled a Browning pistol out of the drawer of Igor's desk and turned to Igor, who walked mechanically up and down by the window, listening to the monotonous droning of the loudspeakers mounted on every lamp post down in the street.

A small crowd of people had collected in front of the building; they just lounged about, without proper aim. On Victory Square there was a patriotic demonstration. One could see people carrying a flag and hear from far away the sound of a few bars of the anthem. Igor took the revolver and put it in his pocket. The telephone rang. Old Costeanu, of the People's Party, was on the 'phone. His voice was vigorous as ever.

"I say," he said, "Sebastian turned out nicely, didn't he? Just what I expected. Still, that's not what I wanted to tell you. There are rumours that old Lehman has disobeyed the order to surrender. His whole army corps is retiring, they say, towards Vargal. I don't know whether it is true, but as I know 'Papa,' I'd believe anything of him. He should be able to make a stand in the mountains. I am an old man, but if I were of your age, I'd know what to do. Good-bye, and good luck."

He rang off. Funny how the telephone continues to function, Igor thought, life just goes on. "Citizens, keep quiet," repeated the loud-speakers in the street. The wireless played the national anthem now. The room with the set was almost deserted. The majority of the staff had gone home. Their desks were clear. A huge fire of papers of all sorts was burning in the office stove. Igor shook hands. How blurred the faces of everybody became by the passing of time! One scarcely remembers.

The rest of the day he saw as through a haze. The loudspeakers repeating over and over exhortations to the population to keep quiet; rifle fire somewhere in the direction of St. Paul's; the drone of a magnificent formation of German bombers, hovering like so many bluish meat flies over the half-deserted capital. Flight.

The nightmare of the two nights on the road, with Sylvia; losing their possessions on the way, they slipped through the meshes of the gigantic net which the occupying enemy threw over the country. Igor knew that it would take time to tighten the meshes. At first it would be easy to get through, before the Nazis got firmly into the saddle; railroads, junctions and main roads were occupied by mobile

troops within twenty-four hours; but there were hundreds of small villages with quiet country lanes and a bewildered population.

The woods abounded with soldiers, some of them with full equipment, who had deserted their formations and tried to get to the mountains of the Vargal. Sometimes they formed themselves into bands and fell upon isolated German detachments of motor-cyclists or transports on the roads. It was all like a dream seen from the distance of two years. Two years of fighting.

Sylvia. Poor Sylvia. One will never see her again. Appendicitis. And there was no doctor at the time to help with a simple operation. It hurt. Oh, how it hurt. But somehow there was so much death and suffering, one forgot much easier. There had been so many tragedies to witness since that frightful week, that one's individual feeling was somehow submerged into the suffering of a whole people. One was merely a drop in a stormy sea. There was much to do, one worked hard, learned the craft of being a soldier. And now one had got a concrete task. Touch and go. A small movement of a wheel within wheels. That's all that remains now from an individual life. I never liked this, thought Igor. But it has to be.

He opened his eyes. The place was quiet and safe. He closed them again and fell asleep.

CHAPTER III

SIR ANDREW TRIES HARD

DUKE ORSINO had his worries. Not only was his digestive system in disorder, which deeply influenced his whole mental state, but also there were grave family troubles, not to speak of the political set-up which seemed worse than ever. He toyed with a carved knife with beautiful bronze reliefs on its handle and weighed it on the palm of his hand. In the well-polished surface of the blade he could see a reflection of his face, as if viewed in a distorted mirror. The wrinkles had been drawn deeper around the corners of the mouth, and his hair was rapidly turning white. His eyes were swimming in tears. These were not tears of grief; it was one of these infernal colds, sweeping England every spring and autumn, which a man used to the mild Mediterranean climate cannot but suffer from whenever occasion arises.

The Duke got up and walked towards the fireplace. His short, now rather stoutish figure was dressed in a morning jacket and a pair of immaculately cut trousers. He was deep in thought, and without looking up he buried himself in one of the easy chairs which stood by the Regency grate of the huge room. Mechanically, as was his wont, he put his hand into the folds of his jacket. God, he thought, that will not do. Pocket Napoleon they used to call me, I must put my hand into my pocket. It will not do to continue as a welcome gift for the cartoonists whenever an international clown is wanted. After all, one is no better than the least of refugees. We are just dust, all of us.

How long is it since we left Illyria? A year. More than a year, to be exact. One just remembers the clear, velvet summer nights of Chateau Blanc, the white summer residence near Port Sol, with the reflection of stars glittering in the smooth darkness of the waves. That is about all worth remembering; of course, there was somewhere in the middle of that summer a nasty scramble, a terrible nightmare of shrieking women, embittered men, mutilated children's bodies.

There was the white face of General Sebastian with tiny beads of sweat running down its wrinkles, with sleepless eyes, saying: "Your Highness, all is lost, the best service you can do to your country is to abdicate." There was the square, stout figure of Curio, planning and plotting until the last moment. There was a flight, a fantastic flight to the Marle Airport, under the sweeping dive bombers of the enemy.

Before that, a madness of packing. Burning papers, destroying documents. The hasty ceremony of an abdication, performed before a few military witnesses in the Waiting Hall of Marle Air-port.

During the ceremony and solemn signing of documents, one heard the droning of the 'plane's engines being warmed up. How dark was that dawn! General Curio, rushing from the telephone, shouted: "We must leave, the Germans are barely thirty miles away. Oliville telephones that they have begun to occupy." Yes, and then one saw the buildings of the air-port pass by, hop hop they jumped down, down, down. We were airborne. Through the small window one could see the tiny maize fields, the white villages smothered with chunks of grey smoke rising from their chimneys, the olive groves, the white dots of goats grazing on the slopes.

It is a long time ago since one saw one's country receding into distance, prostrate and helpless. A cavalcade of history like a handful of faded photographs thrust into a child's not understanding hand.

Mama was airsick and General Curio had a heart attack. So one

could not watch the coast of one's fatherland disappearing in the distance. Instead, one waved a handkerchief perfumed with Eau de Cologne in front of a white face, while an old man had convulsions over a brown-paper bag. One is a Duke all right, still, one feels for one's country.

I always wanted to have a private life but they did not let me. Mama wouldn't. I wonder whether I am happy now, but Mama is not, she will never give me peace; again she is plotting and intriguing. Still the dream is fresh: Gibraltar, Lisbon, England. Who would dream that one would land in England? Yes, here I am and the daydream goes on. Maybe one day I shall wake up and be a private citizen but I am afraid that will not do.

Life is just one huge plot, thinks the Duke. Intriguers everywhere. There is no one I can trust and poor me in the middle of it. Poor me.

The Duke lifted his hand and rang the bell. He had a short hand with soft fingers which made its outline look very much like a child's. A solitaire in a simple gold ring sparkled with the reflection of the flame.

The English don't wear rings, thought the Duke mechanically. A dull nation, though not without noblesse. Yes, that's a thing one must leave them. The lock clicked gently and an old butler in a rather shabby black coat opened the door noiselessly.

"Your Highness?"

The man in the easy chair studied for a moment the butler's round face, with its eyes, washed by years, buried deeply among wrinkles, and the long white eyebrows almost touching the well-combed flaxen grey hair. The man waited with the devotion of a dog expecting an order from his master. "Martin," said the Duke, "bring me a glass of water with the pills."

The door closed, the man was gone. One of the few still faithful to me, thought the Duke. Good old Martin. He had been in the service of our family, how long? Well over sixty years. He was born to one of the servants at my grandfather's court, and became errand boy and later page.

Yes, in these enlightened days one begins to think of servants as if they were almost human. No, in the nineteenth century they were definitely not considered in the same degree as their masters. To-day, however, well, the situation has changed greatly. After the constitution, when Father had to abdicate, I often invited my Socialist Ministers for dinner or lunch. They were quite pleasant fellows, except for their opinions. That is, after all, a personal matter, not to be introduced into private relations.

After what has happened, we are pretty much in the same soup. If only Mama would see the situation as it is; but she is a strange person and it is better not to oppose her when it comes to the point. That's the best diplomacy with her.

Her Highness the Duchess Viola of Illyria was indeed something of a problem. Lean, tall, with dark eyes, she had ever since her marriage been the moving power of Illyrian politics. In spite of her age—she must have been well in the late sixties—the Duchess had an untiring energy which made everybody just so much jelly in her hands. She adored her husband, who had died shortly after his abdication, leaving her with an unstable internal political situation and a family of nine on her hands.

Unfortunately, the Duke was already of age, so a Regency was out of question. Not without regret the Duchess dropped the reins of power in favour of her son; it must be said that she knew well the inherent weaknesses even of her beloved ones and she had no illusions about the characters of her children. Her motherly love was tough and severe, and though on the throne, the Duke often felt he was still in the nursery.

For her, indeed, nothing did exist besides her family and the memory of her husband. Nine children—that isn't a small worry even for a reigning family. There had been six daughters—and until the outbreak of war only two had been successfully disposed of, one into the great aristocracy of Germany, the other to the Royal House of Italy.

Still, this left the Duchess four more daughters to marry when she came to England: Cecilia, Marie, Edith and Marguerite. Of these, Princess Marguerite seemed to go her own way. Having won a scholarship at Oxford, she was studying bio-chemistry and, except for a small allowance, did not make any demands on the family's resources.

Kuno and Bruno, the Duke's younger brothers, were at present in the U.S.A., one engaged in political campaigning, the other graduating at Yale. They seemed to consume an incredible amount of money, and it needed the Duchess' entire energy and diplomacy to prevent the family budget from going to pieces.

There was the beautiful, quiet house in St. James' Square, whose landlords, Messrs. Lubock and Lubock, Ltd., seemed at first gratified to have such illustrious tenants as the Ducal family, yet lately there had been a couple of awkward letters demanding payment of rent. The Duke, who never liked agents, landlords, bankers and their like,

was all for paying them their pound of flesh, but the Duchess thought of the family's strained finances and managed to wage successful delaying actions. She knew that practically everything depended on maintaining prestige, and her plan was to do this with the smallest expense possible.

Though it cannot be said that the House of Orsino was entirely without means, these means were rather restricted by the disorderly circumstances of their flight to Britain, which left the majority of their assets in the vaults of the Bank of Illyria.

It had come to the point where the family had had to dispose of their jewels, a gesture not done without a certain amount of sadness, into the hands of those aristocratic jewellers of Bond Street, whose discretion can always be relied upon.

There were many bills to be paid—for parties, dresses, horses, cars, which seemed a *sine qua non* for the successful giving away of the remaining daughters of the House and for the maintenance of prestige in general. So Martin, the old family servant, had to wear during week-days a rather shabby morning coat, reserving his new one for more illustrious occasions, and the Duchess used to peruse the household budget with an eagle eye, clamping down on all unnecessary expenses.

The situation was further complicated by the yet uncertain attitude of the British Government and the Bank of England; unfortunately, the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street seemed rather offended by certain deals done a short while before the German onslaught with the *Deutsche National Bank*. But after all, in those days Oliville seemed much safer than London. Even for British capital.

And so, when the flood came, the Ducal House was left stranded, except for the help of Malvolio, the former Chairman of Olivia Steel and one of the Directors of the Illyrian National Bank.

God knows how that man managed to get practically the whole of the gold of the Bank's vaults out of the country. There were tales told of a convoy of five lorries which slipped through the night, at the time of collapse, to the tiny port of Hoons, some forty miles east of Port Sol, having on board the precious load packed in bags of flour. In the confusion following the collapse such escapades were not incredible, though it certainly took delicate planning to get past the patrols of Silver Shirts who were rapidly spreading all over the country awaiting the conquerors who were to help them into power.

A similar mystery shrouded the small man's appearance in London. He appeared, seemingly from nowhere, in the shabby suit in which

everybody could have seen him every morning in the 77 tram going to the palatial building of the National Illyrian Bank.

The Illyrian Press, under Sebastian's and German control, raged at this successful coup; but the little man, who had been working with the Silver Shirt dictator for such a long time, did not mind. The assets which he had brought with him, the investments of the Olivia Steel and the National Illyrian all over the world, gave him the most powerful position among the Illyrians abroad.

As far as politics were concerned, he took an attitude of expectancy; his avowed loyalty to the Ducal family was much appreciated by the Duchess, especially as it eased the strained financial situation. But the Duke hated him; Malvolio did not drink, did not smoke, he did not make love.

In the habits of the man there was something inhuman, something which made him into an automaton, into a dry madman; the Duke liked women and ballet, was a connoisseur of wine, a Victorian born too late—except for his bad digestion. While this quiet, soft man whom one could not fathom, dangerously powerful with his power and money . . . better let us not think of it. Here we are, a representative of a once flourishing country, a monarch, in tow of this shadow. Poor Illyria, thought the Duke, poor me.

At that moment the door opened noiselessly and Martin reappeared: "His Excellency, your Highness," he whispered. "Sir Andrew. Are you at home?" The Duke thought it over. Yes, he was at home. "Let him in."

In the brief pause which followed, the Duke quickly recalled to mind the man he was going to see. Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Envoy of Illyria to the Court of St. James. Another of my gallery, he thought. The rat. For there was scarcely a man whom the Duke hated more than Sir Andrew.

At the time of Illyria's fall, Sir Andrew had been the accredited Envoy to Britain for more than six years. His position was excellent and though not without difficulties, he had been able to attain a certain popularity in important circles. His interests in industry and banking made him an important link between the various economic factors in Illyrian life, and his appointment was actually a result of strong pressure exerted on the Duke by General Sebastian and Malvolio.

There was not much love lost between the two men, and until his dying day the Duke would not forgive his visitor the scene which happened after his arrival in London, when the diplomat let him

wait almost an hour before seeing him—unheard-of impertinence, indeed. The situation was such that while the Duke had been forced to abdicate and was therefore an ordinary person, Sir Andrew remained officially the only representative of Illyria so far as the British Government was concerned, and he knew it.

The Duke remembered how infuriated his mother had been when nobody except a second attaché stood at Paddington Station the day of their arrival. The Ambassador knew well the date of this event, but officially he had not been notified. There was no obligation for him to appear, and so he did not. With a sour smile the Duke remembered the poor second secretary struggling with the luggage before the arrival of four sturdy porters. Was that a joke! How the old Duchess fumed—served Mama right, thought the Duke, always keeping up appearances. We had to get four taxis to get the stuff in, including ourselves. The Ducal Family in Four Taxis—what a headline it would have been for the Press!

Only there was no Press, nobody seemed interested. And in the afternoon, when the Duke arrived at the Embassy in Regent's Park, His Excellency seemed too busy to see him for a good fifty minutes. The Duke remembered sitting in the huge waiting-room in an easy chair covered with faded plush, perusing old copies of illustrated papers—the fifty minutes seemed as long as fifty hours. Good thing Mama wasn't there, otherwise there would have been a scandal in the Embassy—and that would not have done.

How kind Sir Andrew was, when at last he condescended to see his Sovereign, thought the Duke. Though fuming, there was nothing left for him but to simulate polite astonishment at the delay, and the Envoy explained that he had to smooth out all formalities with the Foreign Office first and that he wanted to do this before the Office hours were ended. "You know how the English are," he had said, "they have their tea at four, after which they are too lazy to move until five and then it is time to go."

The memory of the ensuing conversation seemed now a trifle blurred. Several times the Duke restrained himself from putting his hand into the slit of his coat; it seemed as if Sir Andrew was ready to do anything to help; of course he did nothing of the sort, and the Duke did not expect him to.

With Sir Andrew's type, nothing succeeds but brutal force well disguised by a polite gesture. At that moment, however, one was entirely in his hands. Just think of that Press Conference, arranged at the insistence of the Editor of the *Daily Clarion*. What a farce that Press Conference had been!

There we were, remembered the Duke, unable to express ourselves in English, and that rogue dripping polite phrases from his mouth, distorting every point one made. Thank God some of those English journalists speak French—though their pronunciation is abominable, but at least one was understood and could correct the rascal's contortions. The harm wasn't great, thank God, for in those days the papers had other things to write about than Illyria. We have travelled a long way since—now his Excellency comes to see *me* instead of I him—but not yet long enough for me to let him wait for fifty minutes—or, better still, double the time. Still, as Mama says, 'All comes to him who waits.' Here we have our Envoy.

Having heard Sir Andrew's most devoted greeting, one could not have believed for a moment that one was dealing with a man who was playing for such high stakes—gambling on both sides. At this moment he seemed definitely soothing, charming, most friendly. He was a very elegant man, a little on the adventurous side, but otherwise what is called "smart." An excellent rider, Sir Andrew was often seen playing polo with the Duke of Somerset and no hunt was deemed possible without at least a letter of his, regretting to be unable to join owing to pressure of work. A beautiful red carnation stuck in the lapel of the immaculate jacket which seemed to have grown naturally on his body, so that his movements were like those of an otter which had just crept out of the pond with a fish in his mouth.

The Duke took the guest into the winter garden, where they sat down to a little glass of sherry under the huge leaves of a palm tree. They spoke of the weather and of the Duke's cold, which was developing along the usual lines. From there the conversation drifted towards more intimate topics.

Sir Andrew thought of marrying. Would the Duke give his consent? "Why, certainly," said the Duke, "but why should my consent be necessary at all?"—Sir Andrew beamed: That would be disclosed at the end of their conversation, he explained. But at first he thought that more important matters than his humble self should be touched upon.

There was a prospect that their beloved fatherland would be received back among the community of nations, that it would get back the right to speak in the councils of the Allies. The British Government desired the formation of a representative body of Illyrians here, though unfortunately it could not yet recognise His Highness as the sovereign in view of his abdication; there were great complications in view of the fact that the Prime Minister of Illyria, Sebastian,

had handed the country over to the Germans, thus preserving a certain continuity of leadership. He was sorry, very sorry indeed, but such was the situation. Unfortunately at the moment he was the only recognised person among the Illyrians in Britain, and thus His Highness could approach the Foreign Office only through himself.

How the Duke hated the man—but there was no help. Yes, all the others were just émigrés, but Sir Andrew was an Envoy; and once an Envoy, still an Envoy. Unless some influential English circles would be prepared . . . But what could one offer except a faded title? Of course, thought the Duke, Mama still lives in the glittering illusion of her 1914 youth when a Duke was still a Duke and an Emperor an Emperor. Unless somebody wants to buy a faded title, I'm afraid we will have to let Sir Andrew keep the helm. He or Malvolio—that's like the devil and the deep sea. Poor me.

The devil had been already looking for a suitable set-up. This was his big chance to get to political power, and he knew it; now let us look around:

There was a nice choice for Sir Andrew. The Illyrian emigration in London was small but multicoloured—politically. There were three dozen or so of M.P.s and former leaders of political parties, two or three professors of the Oliville University, not to speak of three or four thousand lesser fry who lived in hostels up and down the country, waiting for employment permits or recuperating from their perilous journey.

Starting from the left—there was organised Labour, sticking tightly together in an organisation called "Unity," in the hands of Fabian. One must leave it to them, thought Sir Andrew, they organise quickly. Within two months after their arrival they had put together three clubs and one trade union. No, that is not the stuff for partnership in a Committee as he envisaged it. Too much trouble; there was, for instance, old Nemir with his phrases of working-class solidarity—he had been a foundry worker in his youth and now he was too old to learn how to behave diplomatically. Besides, God knew how the F.O. would like such partners, even if he tried to form an "all party" body. With Socialists, coalitions are difficult; their followers stick too much to their doctrines, though Fabian, of course, was an able tactician. No, he thought, let us leave that for a later date.

Furthermore, we have here Cromin, leader of the Agrarian party. A dangerous man, but possibly the right one for the task. He does not like Malvolio—there has always been natural rivalry between agriculture and industry in Illyria.

Sir Toby Belch was a likely choice; Professor of Economics at the

Illyrian University, he had always managed to play a "non-party" game, managing well with left and right. Sir Toby thought of himself as an intriguer, let us leave him at that. With clever leadership he might be of good use.

Who else? Captain Valentine, a non-political sailor, now in charge of some shipping which had escaped when the Germans had occupied Illyria before they had made their agreement with Admiral Antonio, leaving him in that strange unoccupied and neutral position.

Cardinal Révy might bring the support of the Church. The English are a religious nation, they like to have the Lord's blessing on everything they do. Révy would be useful, though not without danger, especially with the Duchess' strong orthodox leanings. Besides, it might shock the Church of England. Still, better to have a good non-party and rather Conservative Cabinet than anything smelling of leftism.

Then there was Dr. Bruyl, the former Liberal leader. Sir Andrew had sounded Dr. Bruyl on the possibility of taking part in such a body, but that man had rather fixed ideas about so-called "popular support." As if that mattered at this stage. Sir Andrew was an aristocrat, he liked the people, but at a distance, so to speak. From close up they smelled, were rather dirty and noisy. Dr. Bruyl was getting old and idealistic; in his head there were probably some ideas of "Popular Front"; besides, he would not come in unless there was Labour in the Committee. And that was exactly what Sir Andrew did not want to do.

Lubomir Bratnu was in a similar position, a funny thin man with ascetic cheeks. He had been an ardent Nationalist, and though he had fought Socialists for many years of his career, he now desired to collaborate with them.

If these men wanted to stay in privacy, let them stay there. Sir Andrew was the Envoy, Sir Andrew had the official position. He could choose, and he would choose carefully. There would be many who would try to smash what he wanted to build. One must choose carefully. If these men got into position with Sir Andrew's help, they would be bound to him by a certain loyalty. With such a Committee formed quickly, Sir Andrew's position would be immensely strengthened. And one must hurry, such an opportunity might never arise again. Indeed, everything seemed auspicious for his plans.

The result of the talk with Lord Camden, the Foreign Secretary, was a declaration on behalf of the British Government that they were willing to meet in consultation a responsible body of Illyrian repre-

sentatives. This would, of course, happen through the existing diplomatic channels—which meant through Sir Andrew.

The English regarded everything else as an "internal" Illyrian affair, and as long as this did not bother them, they very rarely mixed themselves in the inner politics of their Allies. Duke Orsino thought of the situation not without a shudder: once more to get into the hands of this crook! Outwardly he successfully prevented his hand from slipping into the folds of his jacket.

"Her Highness will be pleased to hear this," he said with a smile. If you permit me, I shall call my mother." And before Sir Andrew could prevent him, he rang the bell. When Mama comes it will be more difficult for him, thought the Duke.

"The negotiations seem to be still in an extremely delicate stage," said Sir Andrew, adjusting his carnation, "and there are very intricate problems yet to be solved as regards the Ducal House and your abdication. As your Highness knows, I am the guardian of the Illyrian people's interests and honour. In view of your Highness' abdication and a Government operating in our Fatherland—though, I agree, under great difficulties and enemy pressure—there might be a desire to see in this country only a Committee composed with the full agreement of our people."

The Duke nodded his head thoughtfully: agreement of the people—that meant Sir Andrew. Blackmail. He knew there would be a snag and he was ready for it. If only Mama was here. "Martin, will you kindly see whether Her Highness could spare us a moment? Thank you—" things will be a lot easier. She'll know how to handle you, my pet.

Against the cold logic of Sir Andrew, the Duke felt ill at ease. One mustn't make a broadside attack, that is clear, he mused. Pincer movement, that was the tactic to storm such strong defences. Flank attack. But how and where? The Duke did not know, and the conversation went on.

At last the Duchess appeared. In her dark dress from Molyneux, crowned by a coiffure of white silken hair, she managed to look splendid. How the dickens did that majestic-looking woman come to have this overgrown child of a son, thought Sir Andrew when he kissed her hand.

Again the conversation drifted to the weather and other topics—but not for long. The Duchess felt that the air was hot with important tidings. She de-iced her dignity for the occasion, and enquired gently about Sir Andrew's negotiations.

Sir Andrew repeated his news, and the Duchess nodded her head approvingly. She knew, she said, that there would be difficulties. She smiled. But in view of the welfare of the Illyrian people . . . Sir Andrew also smiled: "May I inquire about the welfare of the Princesses? I have heard that they were interested in the purchase of 'The Grange,' in Sevenoaks. That would be certainly a splendid idea for the coming spring."

The Duchess swallowed at this frontal thrust. So the rat knew that they were not able to afford the price. How was he in the know? Yes, it would be nice if the newly formed National Committee could present the Ducal Family with this charming gift, continued Sir Andrew. The talks with the Bank of England about the unfreezing of Illyrian credits were proceeding satisfactorily and there might be progress soon. Which means, thought the Duchess, that he wants to sit not only at the rudder but on the purse as well.

She bared her teeth in a polite smile and replied that with a negotiator of his abilities . . . Exactly, said Sir Andrew, and added that he would be happy if he could continue to serve their Highnesses even better when the National Committee was formed. Maybe a different capacity would be still more helpful for this task. Though he would not desire to appear to aspire for the post of Foreign Secretary if the Committee should be formed, he was sure that he could be of great use if that tiresome burden should be offered to him.

The Duke looked at his mother, who smiled again and got up. The audience was at an end, and Sir Andrew bowed again, kissing her hand. It was an ultimatum, and they all knew it.

"You said that you are going to be married," said the Duke in the light conversational tone which had pervaded the conversation, "could you tell me who is the happy girl of your choice?" He had barely said this when he was aware of a strong pressure of his mother's bony hand against his back. He looked up to see whether Sir Andrew had noticed it and he saw him looking at a Chinese vase in the corner.

Being sure that the Ambassador had seen what he should not have seen, the Duke blushed with anger; Sir Andrew withdrew quickly, mentioning that he would discuss the matter with His Highness at a later stage, and with a wish that His Highness' cold might be better soon, he was ushered out by the faithful Martin.

"But Mama, how could you," said the Duke, blushing under the Duchess' severe gaze, before the door had barely closed. "You fool," she said bluntly, "don't you know what's up? Aguecheek tries a great bargain. In a situation like this, one must not yield a step.

He feels big now, but when it comes to the point he won't be able to bypass me. The cheek the man's got. . . . Don't you understand that he's after Marguerite?"

"Yes," said the Duke thoughtfully, "at the present moment his position is rather strong and he knows how to use it. But this is no reason for you calling me a fool, Mama." The old woman looked at him with really Ducal anger: "So you'd sell your sister to such an upstart, would you? Besides, you did not ask her consent." The Duke looked at his mother: "I thought that would be your affair," he muttered rather disdainfully.

"Oh, no," said the Duchess. "First he'll have to pull out all my teeth one by one and that'll take some work." The Duke watched her walking out of the room without granting him one more look. His eyes swam in water. Infernal climate, he thought, as he sat by the grate in the high, draughty Regency room.

The telephone rang on the desk of the oak-panelled office in the City. The secretary took out her pencil and said respectfully: "Oh yes, he is. Should I call him?" and pressed the buzzer. Malvolio stopped the conversation he was having with a short, "Excuse me, please," and took the receiver: "Her Highness? Yes, I am here, at her service." The telephone clicked and the deep voice of the Duchess boomed at the other end. "Is that Malvolio?"

The man at the desk bowed his head slightly his leather face wrinkling with an almost imperceptible smile. Yes, there he was, listening.

"Yes, Your Highness. So he does? That's very good news indeed, Your Highness. I did not know that the situation had developed so far yet. Your Highness . . . Me? I'd be most pleased to come. I am at the service of Your Highness. This afternoon at four precisely. I will be there." He bowed again, then the telephone clicked as the Duchess put it down.

Slowly the man replaced the receiver. His wrinkles returned to their usual position, presenting a blank façade to the visitor. The negotiation went on as usual, just a small bargain with the Ministry of Armaments about the price of the Hibert device—a trifle invented by an Illyrian citizen, enabling submarines to locate their prey with more precision. The British Government desired to use this device, and Malvolio, in charge of all the patents of Illyrian inventions, was obviously the man to deal with.

The conference dragged on and Malvolio grew rather impatient. Under his desk there was a small button, to be touched with his knee.

The buzzer was on the second secretary's desk, and there were various excuses ready made for a variety of visitors. This time the excuse was called International Armaments Trust. Against this atmospheric threat the Ministry of Armaments dwindled rapidly and the visitor withdrew.

The small, silent man led him to the door, and expressed hopes of finishing the negotiations soon. Then he walked towards his secretary's door and called her in. "Miss Lee," he said, "will you please ring Sir James and tell him that I am on the way. Most urgent, if you please. Would he kindly receive me at once."

The secretary turned round and was heard on the 'phone. Malvolio, precise as a machine, took his coat from the peg in the anteroom. The fur coat looked moth-eaten and the collar worn out. He walked out in his taut stride; the matter must have been important, for he took a taxi, unlike his usual practice.

When they arrived, he had his fare ready in his hand and did not mind a bit the jeering look of the driver when he gave him a two-penny tip. Anyway, there he was inside, with the porter ushering him respectfully to the lift.

In spite of the fact that Malvolio had left his country, he was still a powerful man. The wealth of Illyria, of course, was now in the hands of the enemy, but the papers of Olivia Steel were still well quoted on the Stock Exchange.

Malvolio must have been a very far-sighted financier, for when the catastrophe came, practically half of the capital in his hands had been invested abroad and sister companies founded all over the world. Malvolio was in charge of them. There were patents and licences to many weapons used by the Allies. Malvolio was in charge of them.

Olivia was the perfect example of a "vertical" trust. Practically everything—from raw material to the finished produce—was in their hands, from rubber plantations to aluminium plants, from copper mines to special electrical equipment plants. And shipping. Not to speak of the gold which so mysteriously disappeared from the vaults at Oliville, out of Sebastian's grip, to be deposited in London. The Stock Exchange had deep respect for Malvolio. So had the Big Five.

At the moment, Olivia collaborated with the I.A.T., which before the war had had a large share in the parent combine in Illyria. There were even rumours about a fusion, but nobody knew how much truth was in them. Only he and Sir James knew what was going to happen. Malvolio knew his strength, and he was well aware that credit by English banks depended very much on securities there.

And he was the man with the securities and the credit. Yes, we can see Sir James, he will be interested in this little game.

"Things are moving at last," said Sir James Bowhill, when the small man entered his office; "I am not in to anybody," he added for the benefit of his secretary, who closed the doors.

The two men sat down in the easy chairs near the fireplace, complete opposites of each other, yet having an inherent similarity which joined them closely, in spite of their different character.

Sir James was a typical member of the English ruling class. Quiet, rosy cheeked, well bred and always in good humour, with his Harrow tie and checked jacket and an ever-smoking pipe between false teeth, he could have been featured in advertisements for soap or whisky. No one would have thought that this kind gentleman was one of the rulers of the I.A.T.—the International Armament Trust.

While Malvolio seemed always in haste, Sir James had always plenty of time. He seemed to have the secret of getting to places without hurry, a secret inherent to his race.

Malvolio, on the other hand, though quiet as well, had in all his actions a continuous tension which made him, as the Duke always thought, a real automaton. The two men sat for a while in silence, gauging each other's thoughts; both had poker faces and both knew each other so well that they could read even the slightest emotions in the twinkle of the other's eye.

"Well," said Sir James at last, "we seem to move. Do not try to tell me the news; just after your message, I had a conversation with Aguecheek. A cunning fellow, Sir Andrew. Seems interested in the Stock Exchange, but I refused to be drawn. In the meantime, I have given Cummings some preliminary orders to buy."

The other man listened quietly. "I do not like the thought of a rise," he said after a moment's silence. "Sir Andrew talks a lot and there certainly will be far too much interest in buying Olivia and Sebastian shares. That is not what is wanted. If I may advise, dear friend, it would be better if you revoke your orders to Cummings and give him a ring to tell him to dump the lot on the market, including the four per cent. loan. That will scare them and we can bide our time. That is what I wanted you to know."

Sir James pondered the proposal for a while. His pipe smoked peacefully, firmly sticking between the white porcelain teeth. "Yes," he said after a deliberate pause, "I think you are about right. It is not necessary for us to back such a doubtful horse as Sir Andrew.

Did he tell the Duke about his conversation with Camden? I thought so. And the old Duchess—did I guess right? *Vanitas vanitatis*—plus money. Yes.” Sir James shook his head. “She is anxious about them being in it, good old Viola. She’d be an excellent diplomat if she did not care so openly about her family. . . . Still, I know what it means. I am the father of three daughters, married, thank God. By the way, did I tell you that I’m going to be a grandfather? Sorry, I did not know that you are not interested in such things. Any news from Oliville?”

Malvolio shook his head: “The Germans seem to behave quite well so far. Some Communists have tried to sabotage the main foundry, but the guards prevented them from doing so. As far as production goes, well, there are plenty of new installations being put into the mines, according to the reports. You ought to know more about it than I do, dear friend,” Malvolio ended with a long look into the other man’s face, which Sir James countered with the best blank expression he was able to muster. The conversation drifted back to London. Both men agreed that everything should be delayed for a while, as there was a danger of premature developments. “The trouble is,” said Sir James, “that the Duke might be tempted into precipitate action. Is there any way to prevent this by political pressure?”

It was Malvolio’s turn to present his partner with a poker face, which he did. He would try, he said. By the way, there was a trifle with the Ministry of Armaments, the Hibert device. Would Sir James help there? Sir James thought it over: “Possibly. Would it not be possible for British Olivia to join in researches with the I.A.T.? It would be useful for the war effort, and not without sense for later co-operation,” he added.

The two men got up; old players as they were, they still felt the pleasure of a successful game against each other. Still, there was a bond of friendship between them and on the main issue of the day they were agreed. A fall was needed before the rise to come. They parted, pleased with the morning’s work.

The telephone rang before the lunch was over. Little Ida was just distributing the sweet course, when Fabian was called to the telephone. The ‘phone, a penny automatic, was situated near the entrance of the hostel just by the staircase. The staircase echoed like an empty chapel. Disagreeable place to talk, but then the ‘phone of the “Unity” hostel was not designed for long conversations. There were constant complaints from all the residents that it had been

impossible for their friends to reach them there, owing to the far too long conversations of other residents.

Fabian had his troubles in running the hostel. These refugees are indeed like children, he reflected. Take, for instance, this morning's nasty quarrel about the emptying of the dustbins. Never mind who was a lawyer in Oliville, dustbins are dustbins and a rota is a rota. If Dr. Vitel is unwilling to do his duty, all right, he can go. It had taken Fabian almost eight months to get his hostel for refugees going, and he would not now permit it to be wrecked by the unsocial attitude of some former *déclassé* intellectuals.

To run a hostel for refugees is no easy job. Men who have lost everything and are stranded in a foreign country without much hope of getting on, without a job or even a permit to work, with about a pound a week to live on, are apt to behave in an odd way. Fabian, an old organiser of Trade Unions, a skilled speaker, whose business it was to deal with men of different tempers and various professions, found the running of the hostel an extremely difficult undertaking.

Besides a couple of thousand of Illyrians who had been in Britain for a long time before the war, there was a small immigration group of a thousand, who escaped to this country when Illyria was overrun, and some more after the fall of France. Dr. Vitel, the dustbin trouble-maker, had been one of those last ones. True, he had gone through terrible experiences; his wife, who had thought him dead, hungry and thirsty while travelling on another ship, threw their only child—a baby less than five months old—into the waves. There was no milk in her breasts and there was no hope for her anyway; she wanted to follow her child to death, but the rest of the refugees prevented her from doing so. When the poor woman met her husband after her arrival in Scotland, everybody thought that she would go mad. Even now one could hear her sometimes, when the night was quiet, whining in the attic room with Dr. Vitel trying to soothe her. Still, that did not justify him in refusing to carry the dustbins. Yes, Fabian had his troubles just like anybody else.

The telephone hung listlessly on its wire. Fabian picked it up and buried it under the mane which covered his head down to the collar. He had gone through many a trouble since he led the General Strike, but though his hair was grey, his voice had the old melodious timbre which echoed in the corridor as he said his "Hello" into the receiver. He seemed quite astonished at his caller. His voice grew aggressively louder, until it boomed like a miniature Big Ben through the empty corridor.

"Meet Malvolio? Me? Never!" he shouted, but the tele-

phone insisted until at last his voice dropped to the usual sufficiently audible level. The telephone went on chattering louder and louder, while Fabian's remarks and interjections grew progressively more mumbling and indistinct; after a while he said quite quietly that he would think it over, and as the telephone heard this, it said something polite about being expected at half-past two at Lyons' Corner House at Tottenham Court Road, and rang off.

Fabian ran his fingers through his mane, and went to his small office on the first floor, where he called a few of the House Committee of the hostel. Little Ida, the junior of the hostel, brought the sweet to his desk, and so when the handful of men gathered round him, they found him eating the last bits of his dessert.

He took them into his confidence. Malvolio's secretary had rung him up in the name of his boss and asked him for an urgent interview to be held at the stated place and time. The question was, should he attend? It seemed that he could not open his mouth without making a speech, forgetting that he was talking merely to an audience of four. In his mind they were multiplied ten thousandfold and so when he said that he would never betray his class, the phrase shot into the room so that the window panes rattled. However, he was curious to know what it was the finance-vampire wanted, and if he asked for his brothers for leave to go there, he did so in a merely exploratory spirit.

Now the members of the House Committee were men as bitter as anyone else, the majority of them being trade union workers and Labour M.P.s, who were drifting about in a foreign country without much to do. Their idea was to call in a meeting of the party to decide whether or not Fabian was to go. This Fabian opposed for the simple reason that there was no time. Before the short meeting was over, two members of the House Committee walked out in a rage; the remaining two were Fabian's followers. Thus his departure to Lyons' Corner House was duly authorised, and as that was what he wanted, Fabian licked quickly the remaining sweet off the spoon and went to his room to fetch his overcoat.

The street was wet from a shower when he got out of the house, and so he took the underground instead of his usual bus. He hated the underground with its hot breath and metallic smell. He remembered, too, how after his arrival in Britain, when he had to exist on a starvation sum of a few shilling per week, he used to spy for people throwing away their newspapers on the seats of the underground and pick them up; his hunger for news had always been bigger than the feeling of shame. Besides, as a foreign worker in a bourgeois country

like Britain, he somehow felt like provoking the phlegmatic English into action which they never seemed to take. But still, to-day the weather indicated the underground.

Lyons' Corner House was as full as ever. Fabian sat down under one of the arches in uncertain Renaissance-Gothic-cum-Victorian style and ordered chocolate ice. Not that he felt warm, but sweets were one of his weaknesses and ice-cream was his chief one. When the ice-cream arrived, he looked at his watch. It was three minutes to half past. He pulled a newspaper out of his pocket and, leaning it against the mustard, dug his spoon into the most succulent part of the stiff dish.

But barely had he started to eat and read, when the shabby figure of the industrialist appeared at his table, at half-past sharp. It was so uncanny that Fabian had to smile, but the smile faded quickly at the humourless face of his partner. The small man was stiff and bowed like a little marionette: "Mr. Fabian, I presume." "Haha," laughed Fabian, "You may, indeed. Pray take a seat. What can I order for you, Mr. Malvolio, champagne, truffle aux champignons, a pheasant? Welcome to the working-class Ritz."

Malvolio sat down without taking off his cloak. "A chocolate ice, same as this one," he said to the waiter, pointing at Fabian's dish. This time Fabian did not smile. He remembered his past meeting with this small man; he was not to be joked with.

At their last meeting things were being decided which later cost many people their lives. Still, here in Lyons' Corner House among the multinational crowd, such big decisions seemed out of the question. Here was he, a leader without following, and there was a man who, though temporarily out of his own country, was still powerful enough to command the attention of the forces of money. What could happen to him? He laughed aloud: Haha. His partner looked at him without saying a word, and Fabian was taken off his balance.

"Well, sir," he said at last, "last time we met I couldn't do much for you, and I don't think that this time I shall be able to oblige."

As the industrialist did not seem much impressed, Fabian realised that he had made a mistake; one must not be rude at the beginning of a conversation, it puts one at a disadvantage. He retired quickly behind a screen of silence and the two men sat for a while, waiting for each other to speak.

At last, Malvolio spoke up: "Are you, dear friend, happy with the political development as far as Labour is concerned? Your friends in 'Unity' House . . ." Fabian cut him short. His fiery

temper was a disadvantage, but he let it go: "Look here, Malvolio, I'm no dear friend of yours. And I did not come to discuss Labour problems with you. Spill what you want of me, and let us part."

He stopped again. Blast, again I have given myself away to this snake, he thought. He was startled as he heard the gentle dry voice saying as if nothing had happened: "But this is exactly what I have come to discuss with you. Labour problems. Or have you dropped your political ambitions?" Fabian wanted to interject at once that his political ambitions were no concern of Malvolio's, but this time he restrained himself and began to eat his ice-cream instead.

"Well," said the gentle voice again, "you know that Sir Andrew's forming an Illyrian National Committee in the near future without you. Have you been notified about it?"

Fabian had not. Most emphatically not. "Just what I thought," said the dry voice gently, "Sir Andrew did not tell you. I am sure you know why."

There was silence again, Fabian forgetting to bring the spoonful of ice-cream to his mouth. "Indeed, I do," he said. "But why the dickens do you of all men tell this to me?" "Because," said the small man, "we two, who have been adversaries all our lives, have for once parallel interests. Sir Andrew did not tell you—but he did not tell me either. Surely you and your party will be interested to be included in a body of this kind. The same applies to me. Draw your own conclusions."

There was silence again; Fabian thought it over: "From our past experience I do not think that you can expect us to put much faith in what you say."

The little man shrugged his shoulders: "Just as you wish. I am what I am, and if I tell you of these developments, it is not because I have any other desire but to further our selfish little game. That is all. I don't expect you to have any illusions." Fabian continued eating, but his palate did not taste any of the chocolate; it seemed merely cool, cool from inside his throat. "I am sorry to leave," said the financier, leaving his dish untouched, "but I hope that you will treat the source of this information as confidential. Otherwise you can do as you please. Good afternoon."

With this he drifted away and had it not been for the three sixpences on the table and the melting ice-cream, Fabian would have believed that the meeting had never taken place. Pity about the ice-cream, he thought. And pulling Malvolio's portion towards himself, he begun to eat, thinking furiously about what should be done.

When Malvolio entered the music room of the house at St. James' Square that afternoon at four o'clock, the Duke and his mother were already expecting him. With them was the oldest of the still available daughters, Princess Cecilia; she had grace and was, despite the age which was rapidly hiding the last vestiges of her southern beauty, not without a certain dignity.

Malvolio had been always fond of her and that was the reason for her presence here to-day. He was pleasant in his own way, for she loved music and so did he. Music was his escape from the world of figures in which he lived, and Mozart and Beethoven were, so to speak, his only means of relaxing, and the old Duchess knew it. That was why she let the conversation rest for a good thirty minutes on this classical topic; which seemed endless to the Duke, who under the strain of waiting could hardly refrain from resting his hand in the folds of his jacket. At last the subject seemed exhausted for the moment and the Duchess led the conversation gently to the main point of the afternoon, namely, to Sir Andrew's proposal.

Malvolio was happy at this development, especially as he foresaw a strengthening of the Ducal House's position because of it. Unfortunately, certain political influences were at work, eager to gain a foothold—or to maintain or strengthen their position, he added significantly. Had His Highness already consulted the Labour leaders? He had not? Well, that might be very good, for in the set-up as it stood it might be best to present them with a *fait accompli* and thus restrain Bolshevik influences which might not be liked by the City and the I.A.T. As far as the frozen credits went, until an agreement was reached only a small part could be freed. Still, Malvolio was sure that the Phoenix Bank would be able to supply the necessary finance beforehand if suitably approached. The conditions, of course, depended on whether the Committee, if formed, could be regarded as trustworthy.

The Duke interjected that it had been said that the British Government wanted to have a Committee representative of all parts of the Illyrian population. Malvolio agreed, but he pointed out that the necessity for expediency at this moment was vital and if His Highness wanted support, he must take it where it was given.

The Duchess did not mix in the conversation, but measured both speakers with her dark, cunning eyes. She felt that Malvolio was playing a game, but she was not able to find out its nature; knowing the man from the past she gave up guessing and aimed a direct question at him: did he think that pressure from the left might be expected, and what tactics should be employed?

The small man was evasive. He did not know; in his opinion a *fait accompli* was the best thing in the circumstances, and if His Highness wanted to contact the Secretary of State directly, an informal meeting could be arranged.

The Duke looked at his mother for advice, but the Duchess got up and thanked Malvolio for his invaluable services. He kissed her hand, and before departing casually dropped the hint that in no circumstances ought His Highness to bother about what happened on the Stock Exchange. Late that night, the Duchess sat peering into a book spread on the fluffy bed-cover and racked her brains as to what this hint might mean. Next morning, she understood, when reading the newspapers. . . . But let us not anticipate.

That evening there was a stormy meeting at the "Unity" hostel. The two dissenters had notified practically everybody of importance among the Illyrian emigrés about Fabian's meeting with the important personality, and as night came, the lounge of the old house was full. Fabian showed no sign of being disconcerted; on the contrary, he said he was most pleased with such a quick response, which would greatly ease the decisions to be taken.

Old Nemir, the oldest Labour M.P. of the Illyrian Parliament, made clear his disapproval of any member of the movement—any member, brothers—who would take such important steps on his own. When Fabian interjected that he had not acted without approval of the Committee or at least of its delegates, the dissenters in the background began to shout that they did not give their approval, and as Fabian tried to overshout them, the disagreement threatened to develop into a first-class row. Here, however, old Nemir interfered, and, taking the chair of the meeting, declared that now the damage was done and the best thing would be to listen to what Fabian had to say.

Fabian began to speak, relating his conversation with Malvolio, without mentioning the ice-creams, however. The refugees listened quietly and the only result was much questioning what the trouble was about; after all, the formation of the National Committee had been very much in the air for the last few months and the only sensational point was that this news had been given to one of their leaders in such a sensational way. It was clear that there had been a plot by the high finance group, as one of the members said, the point being only what kind of a plot and what should be done against it?

Fabian took off his coat. The room was stuffy and smelt of disinfectant. His excitement abated and a wait-and see attitude took its

place. He knew that the big guns must be left for the end of the meeting.

One faction—the dissenters—was for complete refusal to let themselves be drawn into any game of politics; Labour and Capital could never have common aims.

“Of course not,” shouted Fabian, with his booming voice, “nobody ever said ‘common aims.’ This is tactics, don’t you understand? They want to use us; why shouldn’t we use them? It is clear that the Duke is preparing an aristocratic plot with his usual clique. Is Labour so weak as not to be able to cross his plans? No, a thousand times no. (Cannot anybody open the window? I’m sorry that it cannot be—yes, I know, the blackout.) Labour can and will smash through these plans and never permit these intrigues.”

The meeting was undecided for a time. Fabian suggested a manifesto to be published immediately—if possible the next day. That meant having it ready before midnight, to get it into to-morrow’s papers.

At first the meeting squabbled about phrases, but after some three-quarters of an hour, Fabian pulled a ready written manifesto out of his pocket which he pretended to have composed on the spur of the moment, and presented it to the meeting for approval. With midnight close at hand, the manifesto was passed with but few changes, against the voices of the two dissenters and old Nemir, who disapproved greatly of the unorthodox procedure and the speed of the whole decision. In his opinion only the regular Party Congress should be able to take decisions of that sort, and that Congress would not take place before November. When he threatened to disclose the source of information to the outside world, Fabian had to get up and offer his resignation to keep his mouth shut. For it would not do for Labour leadership to disclose that one of its leading men got a most important tip from an archdevil from the City.

Having got carte blanche from the meeting, Fabian proceeded to the telephone in the hall, sweating and hot, but victorious. God, thought he, what a rush; usually one curses the slowness of these wet days of English winter, following each other with such monotony. England is a terribly slow place. Suddenly, bang crash, this turmoil. I hope that the Night Editor will be there and that Walkers has told him to reserve some space.

For, anticipating the results of the meeting, Fabian had gone round to the Labour H.Q., in order to have a word with the Editor of the *Labour Chronicle*. Bill Walkers, the boss of the Labour Press, had a weak spot for his continental brethren; having to support the

Party Truce which was his party's official programme, he nevertheless regretted deeply that this policy prevented a more effective co-operation of the various leaders of the continental parties.

Labour in the Government meant a rather right-wing line; one could not undermine the position of one's own ministers by supporting various tendencies which at the moment were tactically inopportune. But in this instance Bill Walkers had a free hand and he loved it. A docker's son, he disliked and distrusted the upper classes; even twenty-eight years of politics and high office during the short years of the Labour Government in the 'thirties had not robbed him of his Cockney accent and sturdy manners, which were considered "original" or "rude" according to the point of view of his associates. Here was a chance to smash a few highfalutin' intrigues and he took it gladly.

Fabian was happy to hear his juicy voice through the receiver; by chance he was still in his office. At once he called in a stenographer and took the manifesto down. He seemed most pleased with it.

"You just wait for to-morrow," he said, "and don't forget to buy the *Labour Chronicle*. There'll be a bit for you."

Fabian rang off, exhilarated. Well, that was that. It was good to smash the intrigues of that Dandy and the speed with which this was achieved was a guarantee that without Labour, nothing could be established. After all, a manifesto printed in the British Labour's official paper was not without importance for that movement's future policy regarding the Illyrian inclinations of the Foreign Secretary. Most probably there would be a minor row in the Cabinet, but that did not worry Fabian—that was an internal matter of British Labour. He went to bed with the good conscience of a general who had engineered and won a major battle, while the printing presses of the *Labour Chronicle* hummed in multiplying his challenge to the powers-that-be.

When the morning came, it was this manifesto which disturbed the digestion of the Duke and his mother. For, besides the text of the manifesto, there was also a very juicy leader entitled "Authoritarian Tendencies in Allied Politics?" and half a column of nefarious remarks on the back page.

By now the Duchess understood the hint dropped by Malvolio, but the very subtlety of his game seemed breathtaking. She still did not understand what he was trying to get at, and she said to herself that only time could tell. That seemed the wisest policy and she restrained the Duke from ringing the Editor of the *Labour Chronicle* or from

writing letters to the Press in general. It was clear that Illyrian affairs were in for a minor washing, and she hoped that the dirty linen exhibited in due course would not be the Ducal Family's. Besides, the Duke was nothing but a private individual and as Sir Andrew was the official representative, it was time for him to show his mettle.

It was on her account that the telephone rang in Sir Andrew's flat at a rather inconvenient moment, for the Ambassador was just sitting in his bath with his face half shaved. He loved to shave while in the bath-tub and at his wish a mirror had been placed in a convenient position.

When the butler brought the telephone to him, Sir Andrew swore silently about the cruel fate which would let the lather dry on his cheek before the conversation was over. He had had a rather late night at a party, and this was why he did not know yet about the new turn the course of events had taken. As the Duchess' voice boomed to him the news through the receiver, Sir Andrew felt the lather drying on his left cheek even more quickly than usual; the implications of the situation seemed clear to him, though he was unable to concentrate on the issue, his mind wandering away to the clock which was in the next room.

With the Duchess spluttering on the other side, he could not very well ask for the time. The Stock Exchange will be open by now, Sir Andrew thought, I am too late this morning. What a mess . . . Illyrian Four Percent. will be going down, I wish I had kept out of speculation, but with the funds as they are, our own papers seemed the safest investment. The market seemed hopeful and Northwick was advising to buy. Now it will be necessary to sell quickly, otherwise the loss will be even greater as the papers fall. The Stock Exchange will know before noon that Labour is making trouble; a manifesto of this kind printed in a British paper clearly means that left-wing politics are meddling in foreign policy. With a Coalition Government, why, that will mean that our little experiment is at an end. My left cheek is dry already, thought Sir Andrew, gosh, can't she finish. Yes. Your Highness, I will, thank you. That's it, now a quick wash, relather, shave left cheek.

While Sir Andrew crept out of the tub, he pondered the situation. With the swiftness of a man who knows when to hurry, he rang his broker to countermand his orders, and then the Foreign Office to titillate the usual channels.

Yes, he knew it. Temperature below zero; Mr. James Harrison's slightly nasal voice announced that there was a lot of sympathy on behalf of the Government, and that if and when an agreement

between the conflicting parties was reached, he would be pleased to . . . Etcetera, etcetera, thought Sir Andrew. They are scared stiff. Non-intervention. Let us hope that we will be able to save what can be saved out of the catastrophe. Pity, it looked such a hopeful game.

CHAPTER IV

THE PEOPLE

How long did Igor live in the small house in the valley? It could have been three years, but in reality it was only three days and three nights. He had to wait, for the enemy were swarming over the place like angry hornets, searching, questioning, deporting. There was a severe curfew and a virtual state of siege. He who did not show his papers when challenged by a sentry faced death—or deportation at the best.

The woman who hid Igor had great difficulties in bringing him food now and then. He passed the interminable hours chiefly in bed, looking at the flickering shadows, listening to the sounds above his head, to the monotonous taptap of the blind woman, to the interminable quarrels of the two Germans. He learned to know them well in these interminable three days and nights. He ate and slept, slept and ate; and waited. The square-shouldered woman with bare feet came mostly when night fell, to bring him food and news. He got used to her, and she didn't blush any more. She even let him once put his hand around her waist. But that was all.

The morning of the fourth day he woke up, feeling that somebody was watching him. It was she. She stood over him, a silhouette in the darkness, her hands shining in their whiteness against the shadow of the cellar. Her hands were hard with heavy work, but there and then they seemed to shine. He looked at her sleepily with half-open eyes, until, suddenly, she said in a harsh voice: "Come on, quick. We've got to go."

Igor got up. It must have been very early in the morning, and the dampness pervaded the little courtyard. It was very quiet everywhere. They went through the bushes which he knew so well from his arrival and took a short cut across a bridge spanning a small creek. Finally, after some silent wandering, they reached the glistening rails of the track which he knew went through the valley. A signal with

a lamp still burning—a left-over from the night—was standing like a solitary exclamation mark beside a willow tree. The woman stopped: "What is the time?"

He looked at his watch and told her. She nodded: "In twenty minutes," she said, "a goods train will stop at this place. The signal will stop it. You count the ninth carriage from the engine—the door will be open—and there you slip in. They'll take care of you. That's all."

He beckoned her nearer. They stood beneath the branches of a mulberry tree, well within sight of the track. Igor extended his hand: "Thank you." She gave him hers, and her eyes dropped a bit. "My name is Anna!" she said.

Her handshake was strong as that of a man. He looked at her: "Thank you, Anna." She said: "Good-bye." And swiftly, swiftly as eyes wink, she dashed through the yellow leaves, her bare legs gleaming for the last time before the morning swallowed them. That's my country, thought Igor. Good-bye, Anna. He huddled into a shallow ditch and closed his eyes.

As he opened them, the chuff-chuff of a heavily-laden goods train pervaded the stillness. Its vanguard was the acrid smell of railway smoke, so well known from the past. He thought of his travels: Paris, Rome, Naples—ski-ing trips in spring to the Alps—yes. Smoke. Railway smoke.

With a sharp cling-clang the signal went down. It took the goods train another five minutes to reach the spot where Igor lay. Strange: counting carriages seemed not so easy. Like at night when one got out of bed to see whether the gas in the kitchen has been turned out. It was. One went to bed, but felt the urge to get up again, and start anew. So here: one, two, three, four, five . . . Yes, the ninth carriage. The train stopped.

From his crouching position, Igor could discern the steel helmets of the soldiers guarding the train. Everything depended on the right moment for action. Igor was calm, but he felt a slight tremor between his shoulder-blades. The train stood, like a huge glistening caterpillar, breathing heavily. Nothing moved. One of the train guards jumped down and walked leisurely to the engine. Igor put his hand forward. Then his leg. The hand again. Then the other leg. And slowly, as he was taught in the hills, taking cover behind every bush, he crept up to the ninth carriage. But the final piece of ground was difficult to traverse because there was no cover.

Anger swept his mind; stupid woman, why didn't she bring him here at night? He soon corrected himself. There were no trains at

night, because of guerillas. He asked Anna to forgive him the abuse. Then, as if it were a reply to his thoughts, a noise occurred on the other side of the track. Broken glass, a shot, the scream of a woman's voice.

He peered under the carriages, trying to find out. Suddenly he realised that this was his chance. Probably, just as he was intent to find out, so were the guards. He looked up: the only one he saw had his neck craned the other side. He got up and ran. The ninth carriage. The door was half open. He slid in and huddled in the corner, revolver in hand.

There was silence. Finally, a few hurried steps, a shout and the cling-clang of the signal drawn up. The engine took a deep breath. Suddenly, as if by itself, the door of his carriage slid slowly into the correct closed position. With a gentle plop it closed, just as the train started to move.

Igor looked around. The carriage was half-filled with sacks of potatoes, and there were also a few crates of empty bottles. What a woman! Anna. Such women are only in our country, he thought. What square shoulders she had. And a handshake like a man. It was well thought out, the whole plot. One felt like a cog in a huge machine. How they managed to keep running passed his understanding. Out there in the mountains one knew who was friend or foe, and one kept the Germans at a distance. But here . . . the woman, the signal, the incident, the door gently sliding with the lock clicking into the right position, all these seemed to him like incidents in a book. And while he was wondering, he fell asleep.

When he woke up, it must have been about lunch time. The goods train puffed slowly up a hill. Igor put his eye to a slit between two planks and tried to identify the countryside. But it wasn't possible, the slit being far too narrow. After a while he gave it up and waited. Though his nerves were ready for surprise, yet he got a shock when he heard gentle scratching on the outside. As he looked up, the door of the carriage was sliding back and the laughing face of a young lad in a railwayman's cap squeezed in. "Hallo, mate," he said, "Want any lunch? 'Cos there's some potato pie in this 'ere box. Sorry, nothing better. Had to steal the potatoes, anyway."

Igor ate eagerly. The lad was talkative, but didn't ask any questions. All of them knew their lesson surprisingly well, Igor thought. Suddenly the lad stopped talking and pulled Igor's sleeve; and as Igor lifted his head with a questioning gaze, the boy said eagerly: "You've got to change. Didn't they tell you?" No, Igor

didn't know anything about it. The lad opened his trousers and pulled from his body a railwayman's jacket, which had been cunningly tied round his naked hips. While dressing, Igor could not conceal a smile, and the lad smiled too, after having put on Igor's head a railwayman's cap, which he produced from his pocket. "Well, well," he said, "a railwayman with such a beard isn't an everyday sight. What about cutting it?"

They tried to cut it with a pocket-knife, but it looked worse still. The lad got nervous, as the time passed.

"Before we reach Oliville," he said, "they'll open all the doors and check up on all closed trucks. As far as the open ones are concerned, there's a little scaffolding at the left side of the track and a Nazi looks inside every truck as it passes underneath . . . What can we do?" Igor didn't know. The sleepers drummed a monotonous melody as the goods train hummed along.

The lad was in deep thought, whistling through his two front teeth. Finally he said: "I think it will be difficult to pass you as a railway man. There's a chance which must be taken, I reckon. You'll lie down in one of the open trucks close to the left side, so that the Nazi won't see you. If he does, he'll think that you are one of us who fell asleep. He won't stop the train because of that. Come on."

The lad had pulled the door open. The train was just going downhill and to Igor it seemed to run with a swiftness which made him almost dizzy. The lad climbed along the edge with an ape-like easiness, and Igor cursed his literary education while trying to imitate him. When after much exertion he finally got to the buffers, he found out that the exercise had to be repeated twice more. By that time the lad was really nervous, as they were evidently getting nearer and nearer the town, and twice beckoned to Igor to duck between two trucks when they thundered through a small station.

Finally, after much exertion, Igor reached the first open goods truck, loaded with logs of wood. Obeying the orders of the lad, who was greatly relieved and pleased with his instructor's job, he squeezed himself behind the left side of the truck and closed his eyes.

The day was a lovely autumn one, with the sun wandering about the silvery sky and sparrows flying in wild duck formation. Again Igor was assailed by the strange peacefulness which seemed to pervade the whole rear of the enemy, that strange feeling known so well to all subject nations; the oppressor is not seen, the whole thing seems to be only a bad dream. With every beat the crisis loomed nearer and nearer, until suddenly, with a shriek, the train slowed down and finally stopped.

Igor listened to the heavy footsteps marching up and down the track, and the banging of doors being slid open and closed. After a while, the train started up with a jerk. Igor shut his eyes again, watching the world through a narrow slit in his eyelashes.

There. There was the German on his scaffolding, his gaze resting stoically on the train whose trucks passed one by one. Igor felt the gaze run over his face like a cold finger, but it didn't stop.

On went the train, puffing through the industrial suburbs of Oliville, while with immense relief Igor watched another squadron of sparrows sail in circles around the sun. Just as he saw them breaking formation and splitting into flights, the lad returned.

"Time for you to get up," he said. "Now listen. In five minutes we will pass the first bridge. Immediately afterwards we'll get just opposite the loco shed. Our men usually jump off there, though it's forbidden; that's what you've got to do, otherwise you get into the station and there it wouldn't be so easy. You walk into the shed and ask for Cyril. He knows all about you."

Igor tilted his head with interest: "He knows all about me? What do you know?" The lad just smiled: "Well, exactly nothing. But we get news in advance of everybody going down to town. I was just told that you were getting into the carriage and my task ends at the loco shed. You know, I have never even seen Cyril. Though I'd like to, I think better not. Might get him into trouble, one day. All right, mate, that's the bridge. Over there is the shed, wait a minute, the train'll slow down still more. Now, that's it. Jump!"

Igor jumped and fell. As he lifted his head, the smiling figure of the lad disappeared behind another waiting train. Anyway, there wasn't much time for emotions. There he was, in the midst of a huge station, in a railwayman's uniform, not knowing one thing about the railways. He frowned: better to clear out from here. And leisurely, step by step, he crossed the lines of the huge station. More than once he had to pass either a group of German railwaymen or a soldier on guard; but they didn't seem to take any notice of him.

A strange feeling of apathy pervaded the station. Oliville had a goods yard worthy of a much bigger town.

Besides the steel mills, the railways were her most important industry, because almost one-third of the continental west-to-east traffic passed through this point. During the last war the station was almost trebled in size, such was its importance as a neutral junction between the industries of two warring countries. It was twice as important now for Germany's New Order. The station was well

guarded; Igor assessed that with a soldier's eye before proceeding to the loco shed.

Strange, how a country managed to look normal; though it was only two years since the occupation, and though about one-third of the country still remained unconquered, nobody would guess it here. I'd like to have a look at our new building, he thought. When I became Editor it was almost finished; I had a nice room of steel and glass. With three huge easy chairs. Sylvia said that they didn't fit into the modern style of the office, but I like to sit in an easy chair while reading the manuscripts. The new presses were singing in the basement: Made in Germany. Well, they got them back, with interest, too.

"Hey you," shouted a shunter, "look where you are walking! Don't you know that you are heading for trouble?" Igor looked up: Yes, there was trouble all right. He was walking straight towards a German sentry.

He changed direction and entered the shed. Several men in overalls were busying themselves around the three huge shapes of engines, spreading their metal limbs like huge tortoises. An elderly man with soot on his nose straightened his back and then walked up to Igor. "You are looking for Cyril, aren't you?" Igor smiled: "I am." They looked at each other and the railwayman added: "I thought so. Come with me."

At the gate of the shed both of them clocked out, Igor getting his ticket handed over from the engineer.

A lean man with pimples on his forehead was sitting in a box, the badge of the "Flag" organisation in his buttonhole. He was reading a paper and didn't seem to mind what happened. The railwayman led Igor into the lavatory, which was very dark and smelt of fresh tar.

"The only comfort they have left us," said the railwayman, shifting his cap over the left eye. "And the only privacy, too." He pulled a huge key out of his pocket and opened one of the compartments. Igor stepped in, the man locked the door and went away.

Igor felt rather odd in this place, merged in semi-darkness. An odd piece of paper stuck behind the pipe. He could read the headline: *Admiral Antonio confers with Field-Marshal Goering.*

He felt pain in his chest like the prick of a needle: *Illyrian Freedom*, his old paper. . . . Still, there was an inscription chalked firmly over some obscene scribblings saying, "Death to the Traitors!" That was better. There were other inscriptions about the place, but it was far too dark to read them. It was a long time before the man returned. The lock clicked as he stepped in, alone.

"Cyril could not come," he said. "The Silver Shirts are keeping an eye on him and he must keep himself as clean as possible. He will see you to-night. In the meantime you must shave, your beard looks impossible. Here are the things." And he produced a huge, old cut-throat out of his pocket. Igor felt rather at a loss; well, it had to be done, and the engineer had a hard hand.

Igor felt most vividly the comic touch in the whole situation; when in danger one feels so strongly how near is the highly dramatic to most hilarious comedy. There he sat on the lavatory seat, holding on to a pipe, while an elderly engineer in overalls tried to shave his beard without cutting or soaping it first. Funny, too, how such relatively small things like getting rid of one's beard can be a more prolonged and more disagreeable torture than cross-questioning by the Secret Police.

At last the job was done and the railwayman wiped the blade on his overall. "I am sorry," he said, "but one cannot get shaving soap, so I had to go without. . . . Still, it's not so bad. You had better wash yourself over there."

Igor, weary after the ordeal, felt with joy the cooling stream from the tap running down his tortured face. As he lifted his head, the engineer was pulling off his overall. He was deep in thought: "Now listen," he said, "it is extremely difficult to get you out of the station. Guards or Silver Shirts are everywhere. You have seen our Cerberus, Julian. He isn't the worst and does it only because he has to; otherwise he'd lose his job. I cannot risk taking you back to the shop, they're very sharp on us and check up on identity cards now and then. It might be possible for you to get out with the lorries. Therefore, take my overall, that will be better for the guards. The Germans are not so bad, but the Silver Shirts are the beasts; they're keen on catching a guerilla. Now I don't know who you are, but you look to me like one. Got a good memory?"

Igor nodded. The other man smiled: "All right. To-night, at ten-thirty on the corner of Adolf Hitler Square and Acacia Road. There's a tobacconist's stand. You'll be met there. Now wait." And he slipped out.

Igor pulled the overall over his trousers and ran his fingers over the zip. He looked through the window. It was mid-afternoon. A long time until ten-thirty. However, one could endanger such good friends as they were by useless hanging around. Besides, there were things to be done even without meeting Cyril. Good that Donath

taught him these names. The most important thing now would be to get to St. Paul's.

There. The engineer appeared in front of the window: Come on, he indicated with his hand, and together they crossed the courtyard in full view of everybody. "If you want to look conspicuous," said the engineer, "try to sneak around." He laughed and with his finger smoothed the soot on his nose to a huge spot. "I've always been openhearted to everybody. No secrets. Not me." Igor laughed, too. Still, he touched with his hand the small capsule under the shirt. It was still there. They arrived at the lorry parking-place.

A row of lorries stood there waiting to be loaded; there being no petrol, almost all of them had a gas convertor on a trailer. "There," said the engineer, "get busy on that brown lorry. And when the driver comes, hop in." He disappeared with a nod.

Igor was alone again and busied himself stoking the furnace of the convertor of the brown lorry. Two men of the Silver Shirts organisation went past, casting around an uneasy glance. Igor poked into the small opening of the furnace. They passed without turning. Igor felt a small trickle of blood running down his face from one of the many cuts made during the shaving. He lifted his hand to wipe it. His hand was sooty. Good camouflage, he thought, and methodically smeared the coal dust over his face.

At last the driver came. He was a thin, small man with two golden teeth under a tiny moustache. He gave a grin as he passed. "Hop in at the back," he said. Igor obeyed. The lorry started up; Igor fingered in his pocket and found a half-finished cigarette end. He put it to his lips, just as they passed the gate. The guard checked the papers, while Igor tried to light his cigarette-end. He succeeded just as the guard stepped back nodding. The lorry moved with a jerk, and he had to hold himself not to fall down. He took a deep puff at his cigarette; now he felt how much he had missed nicotine during the recent abstinence.

As the lorry drove through the streets he looked almost without emotion on the well-known streets. It was astonishing how little had changed since he had driven through this boulevard for the last time. It seemed like a dream, with Igor in an engineer's overall sitting on top of a lorry, driving down the streets of a calm, busy capital, where nothing seemed changed but the uniforms on the pavements, the patched-up walls in occasional bomb-damaged areas and German inscriptions written in Gothic lettering on yellow boards.

As the lorry crossed Victory Square, he caught a glimpse of the

huge swastika flag unfurling itself from the flag-pole on top of the Ducal Palace. But that was all.

He looked for well-known faces among the crowds thronging the pavements of the fashionable square, but he didn't recognise anybody. The cafés were full of glistening military and naval uniforms, and many women used the occasion of a sunny autumn afternoon to show their summer frocks for the last time before winter.

Igor thought of the grim mountains, of the grey days among the moist mists hanging in the deep-cut valleys where the guerillas fought, of the silent and patient chain of the best of his people, who worked underground, mutually unknown, of the firing squads, every day killing a dozen or so of helpless peasants whose only crime was to grudge the hated invader a handful of flour or an egg or a little milk, and he felt anger raising up in his throat. However, there was not much time to think, for the scene changed as the lorry plunged into St. Paul's, the industrial district on the other side of the River Var, passing a bridge covered by the ever-present menace of two pill-boxes on each end.

The streets there were narrow and dirty, the houses high and grey. That's how the majority of our people live, said Igor to himself, as he looked up the five or six storeys on each side of the streets. Blocks of flats, erected for speculation, they dated mostly around the turn of the century. They were built chiefly in squares, in a manner most apt to economise space and material. No corridors, but staircases and long, iron-girded balconies in the open, leading towards innumerable one-room flatlets.

One water tap for the whole floor, one lavatory, one bathroom. From one side to the other of the huge square, from the ground floor to the top, a jumble of strings, on them a maze of multi-coloured washing. Pants, shirts, cami-knickers, brassieres, bed-sheets, children's washing, all fluttered in the wind. In peacetime one used to find almost without fail a dozen or so painters from abroad, delighted at the picturesque spectacle. Picturesque, indeed. What they didn't paint was the children with their limbs distorted by rickets, playing in the everlasting shadows inside these squares.

There were three huge factories in St. Paul's, the industrial suburb, the black dirty nerve centre of the town: the O.A.L., Olivia Armaments Limited; the "Aero," a huge aircraft combine; and the S.E.W., the Sebastian Electrical Works—all known as Olivia Steel.

Practically the whole lot was at the moment one huge combine, all

of them under the control of General Sebastian, all of them working full blast for the Germans.

Almost everybody in this district of the town worked in these three factories, with their huge chimneys casting their shadows and smoke-far over the deep shafts of the courtyards. At seven o'clock every morning the steam whistles of the factories summoned the drab armies to their gates, to spill out the weary night shift and swallow the day shift.

As there was nothing left for the workers but to starve or work, the labour problem was solved; anyway, the back of the Trade Unions had been broken during the General Strike in 1931, and the quick occupation by the German Armies did the rest, shattering the organised might of the workers as it was known in the past.

It had actually happened as follows: The economic crisis of the thirties had given the death blow to continental economy. Illyria, dependent as she was on steel production and coal mining, with her huge network of communications to maintain, felt the impact of the slump with double strength. The interdependence of German and French economies which had been the source of her wealth in the past proved to be her Achilles heel. The through traffic ceased, and mine after mine, mill after mill closed down. The only industries which kept on working were the 'Aero' and Olivia Armaments busy with huge orders. Unemployment grew rapidly, especially among dockers, transport workers and miners.

At that period Malvolio, who was then Chairman of the whole Olivia Combine, cancelled the collective agreement with the Trade Unions and all rates were lowered in shops and mines; the supply of labour was much bigger than the demand, and so its price fell rapidly. The Trade Unions protested and threatened with strikes, and the situation got worse from week to week. At the same time, elections for Illyria's Parliament approached, due in June of the same year. It became clear that a violent swing to the left might be the result, especially considering the mood of the masses.

Igor recalled a walk through St. Paul's during a warm late spring evening. Under the gentle sky the grey street seemed wrapped in muslin. Little groups of people stood gossiping at corners and in front of pubs and cafés. Children stared around and washing fluttered in the warm breeze. From an open window one could hear the sobs of a saxophone. Someone was practising. Two little girls were playing with a meagre black kitten, pulling it by the tail. The electric lamps swayed gently on their thin wires crossing the street.

Strange what scraps of impressions remain in one's head, thought Igor; a long time ago life was running to a great climax, and what does one remember? Kitten, children, fluttering washing, saxophone-tunes. Indians are supposed to keep as remembrances little things which reminded them of their past by smell: a little bit of hay, a tiny branch of fir help to recall past memories. Yes, these things are a mighty "medicine." Where are we? Oh yes, that night. Igor, adorned with a small moustache long since shaved off, had walked through the humming street towards the industrial part.

There, in front of the main gate to Olivia Armaments was a huge meeting called by the Trade Unions and the Worker's Party. The speakers stood on a lorry, while another flat car served as tribune.

Igor saw himself almost a decade ago being helped on to the tribune, where sat a group of newsmen, their feet dangling from the carriage side. The air was clearly electrified with premonition of great things to come.

The entire day-shift of the Oliville Armaments and the 'Aero' Works were assembled, together with many delegations of the Railway Brotherhoods, which made a crowd of well over a hundred thousand strong. Igor remembered the sea of faces, indistinct in the dim light, with the sharp smell of sweat pervading the air and fighting the sweet scent of acacias blossoming in the nearby grove. Fabian was the speaker. President of the United Trade Unions, he was worshipped by Illyria's Labour.

Igor did not like the man; he had seen him before, had heard him speak to great meetings and admired his powerful voice, his passionate gestures which seemed to pierce the very space before him like so many gusts of wind, his auburn hair with the grey streak on the left temple which drifted gently at variance with the strong square head on an astonishingly thin neck.

Despite his power to raise enthusiasm, Fabian had proved himself an extremely skilful negotiator. He was reporting to this great meeting the result of his negotiations with the Management of Olivia Armaments. These negotiations seemed rather a protracted business, for Rudin, the Managing Director, pointed out that they could do nothing as long as the 'Aero' and the Sebastian Electrical did not move. Similar representations were made there, with similar results. The three combines seemed to play ball with the delegations, pointing each other out as example.

Fabian, after a stormy meeting of the General Council, decided therefore that the best thing would be to go directly to Malvolio,

whose subtle strategy seemed to be cleverly directing the dispute. As an old tactician, Fabian decided that a direct attack would be the best means.

The meeting took place in Malvolio's small house in the garden suburb of Carolinum. The mighty financier directed his world-wide operations from its tiny rooms, furnished with spartan economy. The ceiling was low, and at that moment one seemed to suffocate there.

The four men were received with great politeness. Malvolio, thin lipped, in the shabby black coat which he liked to wear, listened without saying a word to the messages, and then merely shook his head. His voice was dry and gentle, like that of a small boy saying his lesson, learned by heart, at school: He was sorry, but this had nothing to do with him. Labour disputes had to be settled directly with the Managements of the factories. He was not concerned in *these matters*, being only a financial executive of his Board's wishes.

The delegation grew angry. It was clear that this small man was washing his hands of the whole matter, playing a clever but simple game. Fabian voiced the mood of the workers and the high cost of living, but Malvolio did not let him finish: "Now look here, Fabian, all this does not concern me. As you know, I am a capitalist—that means I am concerned with prices and markets. At this moment, produce is being dumped all over the world and prices are dropping everywhere. We have to follow or we are unable to sell. What do you want to do? What do you expect me to do? If we cannot cut our expenses, we shall have to close down. Surely you do not want to force us to that step—or do you? You cannot expect your management to run the shops as social institutions—after all, we are business men. No, please, do not exert yourself—these are my directions and I think it will be best if you let your men decide. I cannot do more for you. Good afternoon."

The small man, like a tiny black beetle in his shabby coat, turned and left the room. How silent the old house seemed to Fabian! His fists clenched, so did those of the other men. However, there was nothing to be done, except to call a meeting and report this ultimatum. In a bitter mood he was, yet the challenge of the small man seemed very powerful. Surely, he argued to the meeting, Malvolio would not dare to take such a stand if there was not a powerful backing behind him. To make a stand now would mean to play his game. The temper of the men was such that a strike seemed inevitable. Fabian, in a speech, the skill of which Igor could not but admire, tried to drive home the danger of such a course. Negotiation seemed to

him a more profitable course. The audience, however, seemed to radiate such defiance, that it seemed impossible even to such a young and inexperienced reporter as the Igor of those days, that he would succeed in changing its mood.

It must be said, that Fabian fought hard. Within half an hour he brought the meeting, which by that time overflowed the square, within an inch of agreeing to a compromise.

At that point a small man with thick glasses suddenly went up to the platform and began to speak. Igor tried to recall some of the echo which rang from the buildings on that day. The square grew dark and silent. Point by point he brought down the edifice built up by Fabian's speech, and within ten minutes the silence was broken by waves of applause, gushing like raindrops into the speaker's face.

Igor had forgotten the little man's name, but he could never forget him. He never again played any rôle in politics, but that evening his only speech proved decisive: he put the whole dispute as a provocation.

If the demands were dropped, it would be a victory for the management of the biggest single employer in the country. The back of the Trade Unions would be broken and they would completely disintegrate, for surely all smaller firms would follow Malvolio's example. If Malvolio thought that he had got all trumps in his hands, they could not wait longer. For if the Unions should give in now, then Malvolio would really have all the cards in his hands and they would have lost the game entirely. True, it was against great odds, but still, the fight was on—and it was now or never. Well, the meeting had to decide. And he knew how it would decide.

What a roar of applause followed! Fabian himself seemed moved and accepted the meeting's decision by a handshake with the small man. A resolution was framed, proclaiming a strike unless the old rates were reinstated before the morning. Also, messages were sent all over the country, asking for Union support, posters put up all over the town; the night-shift went on working, but pickets patrolled the gates.

When Igor had returned to the *Freedom*, old Gaston, then Editor-in-Chief, scratched his chin thoughtfully and predicted trouble. The trouble came when the police tried to clear the pickets in front of of the mills. Igor was there, but arrived too late to see the beginning of the scrap.

He arrived just in time to see an attack by the mounted police on the crowd, which dispersed in all directions, when suddenly a shot fell, hitting one Sergeant Lafordi through the eye. He was killed on

the spot, and it was never cleared up who fired the shot. The workers asserted that it had been fired by an *agent provocateur*, and though this assumption seemed quite plausible, at that moment it did not matter who fired the shot, but that it was fired at all.

The Commander of the Gendarmery Platoon ordered his men to fire, and twenty-seven bodies fell on the slippery pavement like a child's doll when someone pulls the stuffing out of it. It was almost a funny sight; how the skirt of a big fat woman flew over her head and she tried to get it down, while running for her life; Igor felt the twitching of hysterical laughter in the muscles of his face. He stepped into a telephone box and looked, looked, looked. He was the eye, meant to see and to register this chapter of Europe's destiny. His eyes ached from the flashes of carbines, from the brownish-red small puddles of blood on the pavement. But he looked.

A baker's boy fell, hit in the chest, scattering his pastries all over the cobble-stones. The gendarmes with their horses seemed to have gone crazy, chasing every moving object around the square, until the shrill whistle of their captain called them.

The huge square was empty except for the twenty-seven bodies scattered on its wide space, and the small group of bluecoats, carrying away the dead policeman.

That was that; Igor inserted money into the telephone and dialled the number. The telephone was cool and indifferent. When he got through, it took him some time to get together a coherent message. Gaston whistled. "Come back at once," he said.

Well, that day started Igor on his career as a newsman. From a reporter to a fighter—that had been his way. Having been the only witness of the scrap, he got headlines over all the world. His had been big news, for that night a General Strike had been proclaimed all over the country, as the Unions followed one by one the proclamation signed by Fabian.

Two tense days followed. By an anxious speech on the radio the Duke tried to appease the angry populace. The wireless technicians having stood by the strikers, the broadcasting service was manned by the Army Signallers. The Broadcasting House was surrounded by a triple cordon of Gendarmes, armed with tear-gas bombs and carbines. One of the advantages of being a pressman is that one can see history in the making. Igor was one of those privileged to be present at the Press Conference in the Reception Room of the Ducal Palace immediately after the broadcast.

The Duke arrived, his soft chin folded in worried wrinkles; he disliked broadcasting because of his frail, rather high-pitched voice. Tiny drops of sweat stood on his bluish well-shaven cheeks and a corner of his mouth twitched nervously. He faced the reporters in his favourite position, right hand resting on the fold of his jacket. Not for nothing they did they call him 'Pocket Napoleon.'

Behind him, like a sinister shadow, stood the thin figure of General Sebastian, his long thin fingers resting with their tips on the highly polished mahogany table. Igor knew well that Duke Orsino disliked Sebastian intensely; the Duke made a statement in his tired, colourless voice. His spirits were low and the appeal to preserve peace and order did not seem inspiring.

Suddenly the door burst open, and an adjutant broke in, clicking his heels. A slip of paper, passed from hand to hand, fell finally on the mirror-like desk.

The Duke resumed, without much hesitation: "Gentlemen," he said, with his colourless voice, "huge demonstrations are being reported from Port Sol. The strikers are arming themselves with weapons smuggled from abroad. I have discussed with my military leaders necessary precautionary measures. They will be taken. Any disorder will be ruthlessly suppressed."

Again, the history of those days has never been properly explained. Whether or not the strikers took to arms before the Gendarmerie stepped in, or only after the armed intervention, will probably never be known. General Sebastian whispered something into the Duke's ear, and the press conference was closed.

Half an hour later, martial law was declared and the Army began to occupy strategic points of the town. Water, electricity and transport were open to the public the same afternoon, manned by conscripts. The backbone of the General Strike seemed broken.

In the evening, however, when the soldiers were preparing to occupy Oliville's huge railway stations, they were met by resolute resistance from the workers and the conscript Army refused to fire into the crowd. That was open insurrection.

The night was quiet, but both sides prepared feverishly for the next morning. General Sebastian struck quickly; after midnight he used the power granted to the Army to order large-scale arrests of all leaders of the strike. This move was not expected, strangely enough, and so by dawn Fabian and the whole lot of the Trade Union leaders were under lock and key; the strike was without leadership.

By the morning, the wireless announced a Military Cabinet with

Sebastian as Prime Minister. A message was read, signed by Duke Orsino, asking for the cessation of the strike, and offering a large-scale amnesty. Three hours later, Fabian was on the air, telling the people that the fight was lost, that the best thing would be to save what could be saved.

Igor was covering the happenings at the railway station that day. Huge loudspeakers broadcast ceaselessly across the high wall, and the grey lorries of the Army were replaced by the clattering motorcycles of the Gendarmerie. It started to rain, and the helmets of the gendarmes shone like bubbles of black soap on the asphalt of the road. Finally, the order to attack was given. The chain of helmets went forward.

Somewhere, from a water-tower, a machine-gun began to chatter. The strikers had got hold of arms, probably from their brethren in the Olivia Armaments. Bullets fell into puddles like thin hail. The gendarmes retired with several casualties.

Igor tried to telephone his office, but the lines were closed. The station was already isolated from the rest of the town. He arrived back just in time to see four armoured cars break through the gate; it looked just like a hideous stage setting, with well-produced pauses filled in by the monotonous background of the rain. Then the machine-guns of the armoured cars began to speak. A captain of the Gendarmerie ordered his men to attack. The black figures ran towards the gate.

A small cannon began to bark somewhere in the yards on the flank. Igor knew that the strikers' cause was lost. For half an hour some firing could be heard, but it seemed to creep back from the station towards St. Paul's. By noon the situation in the residential quarters of the town was firmly in the hands of the police. Fabian had been released and had negotiated terms of surrender with the Cabinet, but he did not say that it was that formed by General Sebastian. During the morning, a virtual military dictatorship had been installed.

The danger of civil war had passed; shops were opening again and many people were sitting as usual in front of their cafés. The populace of Oliville's palatial quarters seemed to take the change of Government without much interest; though explosions could be heard in the direction of St. Paul's, not a line appeared in the papers save the result of the negotiations with the Trade Unions and a proclamation by the new Government promising to stand by its terms.

That night the strike broke down in practically all the small towns

over the country, but the insurgents in St. Paul's entrenched in the huge tenements still held.

General Sebastian broadcast an ultimatum, followed by Fabian, who explained to the rebels that their position was hopeless and that the terms of the new Government were magnanimous enough to be accepted. This message was rejected, and so, during the morning of the next day, artillery was brought up to smash the most important positions of the insurgents. That was the end.

Igor was not permitted to see the fighting until all was over. Then with a delegation of the Press of all foreign countries, the newsmen were conveyed through the battered streets, with huge holes torn by grenades in the grey-eyed tenements of the worker's quarter, with makeshift barricades of iron bedsteads, stoves, chests of drawers, wardrobes.

Silent figures with leaden faces moved about, trying to salvage anything usable from the havoc which had swept over their life like a gust of hurricane. Military kitchens stood on the street corners feeding the population with soup, and the strongest impression Igor remembered was created by the impact of a young girl's eyes which rested with indescribable sadness on the group of correspondents passing by.

There had not been much bloodshed. Less than two hundred and fifty had been killed during the whole of the trouble, and yet an atmosphere of utter desolation rested over the whole quarter; an atmosphere of impending doom, of defeat much larger than that sustained in reality. As if something dear to everybody had been smashed to pieces.

What happened to the small man who made the fiery speech at the meeting, Igor did not know. After the speech on the platform with Fabian, the small man disappeared in the crowd and swiftly moving events effaced individual memory. Probably he was one of those thousands who were arrested and detained in the camps throughout the country. General Sebastian showed clemency; his object was not slaughter but the maintaining of law and order. After having broken the back of the opposition, he had no further interest in keeping men behind barbed wire.

The Duke's amnesty, signed five months later, released the majority of the insurgents except the leaders, five of whom were hanged. But with them, something else perished. As John Davies, U.P. correspondent at Oliville, wrote in his despatch: "The Salvos fired on the 27th May were the first shots of a new European war."

So they were. But the majority of the peoples of Europe, including his own, had been blind to the menace. They did not see the danger in the growing of the officially sponsored "Flag" organisation of the Silver Shirts. Not until the German invasion did they show their teeth—and what teeth they had! Not until the German invasion was General Sebastian branded as the sinister personage he was. For many were happy when he managed to suppress the Red Menace, and his liberal government, managing to get along without the trenchant methods of its followers, had many an admirer. Like Mussolini, General Sebastian made the trains run to time—only the direction in which they were running was a wrong one.

Such was the background of the quarter Igor was now driving through, and these or similar thoughts were in his mind. As they drove through a seemingly unending lane, past the parade of erect, grey-eyed blocks of flats, he looked at the numbers. Angel Street was the name of the lane, given to it for some unimaginable reason; he knew it well. It was among the addresses he had to memorise.

He crept along the barrels on the back of the lorry, to knock at the driver's look-out. The driver turned and grinned. His gold teeth flashed, he nodded and pressed the foot-brake. The van stopped and Igor jumped off. He leaned for a moment into the driver's cabin, thanking him for the ride: "It's all right," flashed the gold teeth, "I'm always glad to give a lift to one of the buddies. Here's a cig for you." And he pulled out of his pocket a crumpled German-made cigarette, handling it carefully like a very precious thing.

Igor took it, shook the driver's hand, then lifted his hand in a cheery good-bye, and the truck pulled off. Funny, thought Igor, how all these men are helping me as a matter of course. Probably they haven't got any imagination; they just do not think of danger. Or they get used to it.

His mind scanned the pages of his memory. Number 57, that's it. He stepped into one of the courtyards and looked into the maze of washing hanging over his head, before he began ascending the staircase.

Three children were playing with a dirty, hungry-eyed cat in the dust around some bins in the corner of the yard. The staircase smelt of garlic and sour milk, dirt and sweat; he pondered about the hundreds of little worlds behind closed doors of the small flats of this house. How many women there were preparing dinners for their husbands?

He branched off at the fourth floor and walked along the narrow balcony, searching the numbers and names on the doors. Number 188, that was it. He looked around and knocked.

A shuffling of feet was heard behind the door, then it opened. A small face looked out; it belonged to a fourteen or fifteen-year-old boy, with grey-blue eyes. He looked suspicious and tried to close the door quickly, but Igor put his foot in, so that he couldn't slam it. The kitchen inside was dark and Igor could see only the reflection in the boy's glistening eyes. His pupils seemed dilated with fear.

"Just a minute," said Igor, "better let me step in." He put his strong hand through the opening on to the cramped one of the little boy. This touch seemed to relax his hold, so that Igor was able to open the door and step in.

Inside it was dim and stuffy. The curtains not having been drawn open, the grey light was sifting through large holes in their meshing. Two little children were sitting on a bedstead, watching the newcomer with anxious anguish. The little boy seemed reassured by Igor's looks, but obviously waited for him to begin. Igor cleared his throat: "Where is your father, or your mother?"

The kid looked at him with an empty expression: "Gone. Gone two days ago. The police fetched them. I wasn't at home. But Ilona came in from school and they beat her because she cried." One of the children on the bedstead obviously shrank as her name was mentioned.

Igor assessed the scene at a moment's notice. In the last two years he had seen many such a sight. Up there, in the mountains, one saw such things every day. All over the country one saw such things. All over Europe. Still, he was touched and wanted to help, though his instincts told him to clear out as quickly as possible. One courageous group of fighters seemed betrayed and lost. In the twilight of the underground resistance, it was necessary for people to know as little as possible about their comrades in the never-ending fight. He hesitated for a moment, then said in a rather questioning tone: "I am Uncle Francis' brother. Don't you know what happened to him?"

The little boy seemed moved for a moment, like a flash the shadow of a smile passed the corners of his mouth, then he looked in the direction of the children and said: "I don't know what you are speaking about. That must be an error. I have no Uncle Francis; the only uncle I have is Uncle Barnabas, who has been sent to work in Germany."

Igor looked at him as he spoke, registering every movement of his face. One gets quick perception when one lives in the mountains, he thought. That lad obviously lies, but I do not think that I'll be able to get anything out of him.

Obviously he thought Igor was an *agent provocateur*, and there was no chance of making him change his mind. So he said: "You are hungry?"

The little boy's face seemed immobile. Only his eye-lids lifted a little; obviously he assessed Igor, and his looks were so penetrating that Igor felt in awe of this unhappy child. At last the lad made up his mind: "I am not hungry, but the children are. Ilona hasn't eaten anything since last night."

Igor fingered in his pocket. There were only a few coins there, and that was all he could give the boy. Though there were huge sums in paper money sewn in his sleeves, he did not dare to give a bank-note to a child. He felt sorry. He pulled out his purse and halved the coins.

"There," he said, "for Ilona, I'll send you more to-morrow." He shoved the money into the lad's pocket and patted his stiff arm.

He felt proud of his people. Look at the little boy, how hungry and yet upright. No, you won't get us down, you fools. He will never cease to be a fighter, will he.

He turned to go. The little boy stepped towards him and opened the door. His lips moved a little but he said nothing. Igor walked quickly, descending the squeaking staircase. He felt at the back of his head the gaze of two firm, blue-grey eyes.

That seemed to be tough luck, thought Igor, as he stood in the street again. After all, it was his job to contact various men in the capital and bring them messages of the General. After all, if the resistance of the Illyrian people was to be really effective, some kind of centralised co-ordination was necessary. It was indeed difficult to organise that, especially because of the division of the country into an occupied part and the fighting country of the Guerillas. Now it seemed that General Sebastian's Silver Shirts, together with the Gestapo, were on the scent of the plan. The first of his contacts was broken and it remained a problem whether or not to risk another address in view of the situation.

He had supper in a small vine-tavern called "Grandpa's Broken Tooth," where he ate fried potatoes and got a quart of lovely white *vin du pays*. It was rare now, the Germans drank too much.

The landlady, a very fat, good-humoured woman, seemed to know

all the answers. She had fingers like clever little sausages and her eyes swirled around the room like busy tadpoles in the deep pools of her fat cheeks. She had beautiful teeth and a rascally smile, adorned by a small moustache.

She seemed to have taken a liking to Igor, who at first, deep in thought, replied rather unwillingly to the shower of questions; but one or two of them excited his interest and he turned his attention to the landlady, who swam in the conversation like a swift-minded fish. Her increased weight had probably made her mind quite nimble. The only answer she did not know was why her place was called "Grandpa's Broken Tooth," having been only thirty years in the place. From her talk, Igor could piece together that in the last ten days several explosions had happened in the Olivia and Aero Works, causing but small damage yet followed by a wave of arrests.

Agents provocateurs, Igor thought instantly. Our men would place the charges at the proper places, and when they strike, the crippling of the works would be certainly thorough.

She also knew who had been arrested and when. Igor strained his mind to remember at least some of the names. In the middle of her conversation he wondered for a moment whether she was not, by chance, one of the Silver Shirts, but soon he dismissed this suspicion for the obvious reason that she did all the talking without trying to find out who he was or what were his opinions.

He ordered a glass for her, and as she drank it, he sat rather close to her. "I say," he said, "would you care to help the family of a friend of mine? Their father met with disaster, and they are left alone without a friend. I would pay for their upkeep for a while, if you'd care to help." She dropped her glass, her eyes becoming stern.

"My boy," she said, "I'm sorry, but I cannot help. I have two kids of my own to take care of and there's the family of my brother-in-law who depend on me, not to speak of my old father. No, no. I could run an orphan's asylum, if I wished, but it's bad for business; one must think of one's own first." I am a fool, thought Igor, after all, the woman is quite right, and he watched her clever little fat fingers count the money as he paid his bill.

"Hey, youngster," she said just before he opened the door, "better check your papers, the Boches are sweeping St. Paul's these nights, so you need not ask me to take care of your kids, in case you have any."

There she stood, quite business-like and good-humoured, obviously a sensible woman running a business in the midst of misery; Igor could not resist a smile. She waved her sausage-like fingers and the

tadpoles of her eyes squirmed along as she said good-bye and good luck to him.

He stopped for a moment as he entered into the darkness outside. Smoky fog hung over the street, changing the semi-darkness of the working-class quarter into almost complete blackout. Because of their fear of troubles some measure of lighting had been maintained by the authorities.

It was about seven, and soon this was confirmed by the melancholy hooting of the sirens in the factories to the west of the town. Very soon the streets would be filled by the nightshift returning home, and that was the moment to move about, as checking up was rather difficult at such moments. He had studied the map of St. Paul's pretty closely with Donath up in the mountains, and as he knew the town well, he found his way without great difficulty.

Another of the huge blocks swallowed him and he ascended a staircase closely akin to the one that he had seen in the afternoon. The same smell of garlic, dirt and sweat pervaded the house, mixed, this time, with the smell of dozens of dinners at the point of boiling. By that time he was used to the atmosphere of the quarter. Food had put him into a buoyant mood. He counted the flats on the second floor and rang a bell.

A strong shouldered man, with a towel in his hands, opened the door. Evidently he had just come from the factory and was washing his body. Igor saw the moist skin over the hard muscles shining in the dark.

"I am Uncle Francis' brother," he said, feeling the silliness of this phrase. "Do you know what happened to him?" The moist figure stopped for a moment; one could almost see the man straining his eyes to discern whether the newcomer was "straight" or not. Igor knew that he had to wait; he stepped aside so that the man could see his face in the reflected light. This gesture seemed to reassure him. He said the correct reply: "Step in, Joseph, there is news for you."

Queer to be addressed as Joseph, thought Igor, but the worker was dead serious and continued to dry his back by means of the towel which he had slipped under his armpits.

Evidently satisfied by his examination, the man threw the towel into the corner of the room on a heap of dirty linen and said, putting on his shirt: "I am sorry, brother, to be so cautious, but you must understand that this is no time for joking." His hairy hand shot through one sleeve, while the other arm waved around in a vain effort to get through.

Igor unbuttoned the end of the sleeve and watched to see what was going to happen next. The top of the shirt burst as the huge head appeared through the collar, and a small button flew by the force of the explosion halfway across the room and disappeared under the bed. The man rolled his eyes and repeated: "Yes, this is no time for joking. Berenike!"

There was silence for a while, until, at a repetition of the shout, a beautiful lass of some twenty or twenty-one years opened the door of the room behind the kitchen and dashed out.

"My button has fallen under the bed," snarled the man, rolling his eyes. She cast a curious glance at Igor and promptly started to creep under the bed to get the button out.

"We can't get any buttons nowadays," the man said, rolling his eyes again. "We must retrieve what we can. Berenike!" The girl appeared: "Yes, Daddy." "When you have found the button," ordered the tyrant again, "sew it on again, and firmly this time . . . or else!"

"Yes, Daddy," said the girl, diving under the bed again. The man lifted himself for the first time, and Igor saw that he had indeed a giant stature. In spite of his bushy eyebrows he had quite sympathetic features and his terrifying rolling of the eyes was merely an awe-inspiring device to get respect where respect was due. He looked at Igor and nodded approvingly; Igor's original bemusedness changed into sympathy.

"You know, brother," said the man, trying to fix a tie in front of a broken mirror, "nothing is as it used to be in my youth. Berenike is a good girl, but she needs a tough hand. One of these young 'uns, she even wanted to join the S.Y.W. My daughter, please, to join a yellow organisation. My daughter!"

"But I wanted to do it only because they have a nice swimming pool and hot showers," said the girl, who had just emerged from under the bed, button in hand and was proceeding to sew it on to her father's collar.

"Never mind the swimming pool," snarled Daddy, while she busied herself with her needle, "they won't buy my daughter with a pint of hot water. No, sir! Berenike! You have pricked me!" "I am sorry, Daddy."

Igor sat down and smiled inwardly. He began to like the man. S.Y.W.—Sebastian's Young Women. Girl's Silver Shirts. He knew the organisation, he knew its aims and he understood the old man's anger.

Finally, all settled, the man beckoned him to the table. He was astonished at the cool, efficient look of these eyes which seemed to him to roll rather funnily only a few moments ago. The giant scrutinised him closely.

"All right, brother," he said then. "Spill the parole." Word by word, like a school-boy, Igor repeated his lesson, the giant taking note of every word he said. After Igor had finished, he said: "Now it's my turn," and started to declaim his answer. Having finished, he smiled for the first time.

"My boy," he said, "almost thirty brothers were arrested only a week ago; that much is known to me. Probably there will be more. There are *agents provocateurs* all over the place. One never knows whether one of the poor suckers spilled your name when questioned by 'them.' So you understand, don't you?"

He seemed almost touching in his naïve attempt to make good his bad reception. Igor felt a warm wave mounting in his throat. Yes, that was a man, that was. Still, there's a lot of business and not much time in which to settle it. He began to speak, slowly and distinctly.

The giant had a slow-working mind, but it seemed to work like a photographic apparatus. His name was Stettin and he was secretary of the clandestine shop stewards' committee of Olivia Armaments. That committee had been established only recently after lengthy conversations between the various groups of the factory.

Officially, he was one of the members of the Yellow Union, run by the Silver Shirts, this dual rôle requiring much skill and discretion. It was imperative, he said, that his address be knocked out of the chain of communication because his house would certainly be closely watched and any emissary from General Lehman might endanger the whole organisation in the factory. Igor made a mental note of this and promised to take all necessary steps. Stettin's committee had got into touch with shop-stewards' action committees all over the capital. Stettin mentioned covering "pen" names which were quite familiar to Igor.

Except for the closest collaborators, nobody in the underground movement knew the real names of other members; the less one knew, the better.

Olivia Armaments were well organised. There were three clandestine papers coming out, supplied with paper from a paper-mill fifty miles up the Var, with whose organisation Stettin was in touch. As Igor listened to the points of the report, which trickled out of the man's mouth in a slow, hesitating stream, he thought of his arrival,

the chain of calm, smiling faces, of the women whose bare feet disappeared among the bushes up there near the railway track, of the button, which fell from the giant's collar as he pushed his head through the shirt.

"You see, poor Velinsky did great damage," said Stettin at this point. "It is said that . . . that they put burning matches under his finger nails to make him speak. His fingers were burned as he hung at the gallows. It took them three days to break him. He didn't know much, thank God, but what he said made them alert; we were able to cover up the tracks but a gang of our men were arrested while trying to get away two dozen boxes of hand-grenades. It almost broke our district. Now there's a lot of kids to care for," he finished.

Igor nodded. The kid with blue-grey eyes, glistening in the dimness of the cold kitchen somewhere in one of these blocks came into his mind. He pulled a knife out of his pocket and began to pull open the hem of his sleeve.

There, in thin, glistening notes, was the money which he had brought. He pulled the notes out; they were for a thousand levas each, and he knew that Stettin would have the opportunity of exchanging them clandestinely for small change in the banks by means of contacts in the cash departments. The giant counted the money: "Thank you, brother. It was much needed."

He rolled the notes into a thin bundle and stuck it into his hip-pocket. "Don't you worry, I'll give it up within twenty minutes." This done, he roared: "Berenike!"

The girl appeared, whispering, "Yes, Daddy?" Stettin rolled his eyes, and Igor watching the scene, felt a desire to smile. But he suppressed it. The giant said: "Our guest has torn his sleeve. Bring your needle and sew it up." The girl went out and returned without a word.

Not a word was spoken while she did her job; for a moment Igor felt her light breath on his neck. She adjusted the sleeve, without looking at him. Her hair was soft and of a warm brown.

He looked at his watch: time to go. He got up, and the giant said, after motioning the girl to get out: "Are your papers in order?" Igor nodded.

The giant stretched his hand: "Be careful, brother. One must be these days. If anything happens to me, I hope that the girl will be spared. She knows nothing."

And as Igor stepped out, he added in a whisper: "Good-bye, and when we meet again we shall not know each other." The door closed,

and Igor was alone. The staircase creaked as he went down. The street was empty.

Igor joined a group of five men walking down the long, grey street until he reached the tram stop. A lonely policeman, looking rather shabby and worried, directed the thin traffic on the crossing. The electric lamps, half lit, generated a scanty light under the brilliant moon.

As the tram came, Igor stepped in; the tram was packed. He hung on the straps and listened to the conductress singing the stations out like a muezzin on the minaret. When the conductress called Adolf Hitler Square, Igor stepped out and looked up.

Right there, just opposite, stood the building of *Illyrian Freedom*. There was light in the editorial room, one could see it under the badly adjusted blackout. If one stepped nearer, one could probably hear the presses singing in the basement and smell the newsprint on the warm paper.

Igor turned to the side. In the corner of the square stood a massive wooden gallows; such as one saw on mediæval wood-cuts. Black, ugly, empty L. When passing it, nobody seemed to look at it, though there was a constant stream of people on the pavement nearby. There it was, that poor Velinsky had hung. Igor saw the porcelain pipe smoking quietly in the corner of the broad mouth while the bushy eyebrows of the man went up and down, and the pointed belly was sticking out under the old-fashioned waistcoat.

What a man that was! Igor shuddered as the thought of burning matches stuck under one's nails. He turned his head and tried not to think of it. Yes, there was the tobacconist's stand. A man stood there, trying to light his pipe. The cigarette the lorry-driver gave him was a good pretext. They looked at each other while the light puffed between them, but didn't give any sign of recognition.

Igor leaned at the corner of the stand and seemed to enjoy the night. The other man did the same. Nothing happened for a few minutes, then the man suddenly came nearer and whispered, asking whether Igor was waiting for Uncle Francis. Funny; it's always funny, thought Igor for the *n*th time. Of course he was. And they went.

He followed the man at some twenty paces, distance. He led him around through various streets, then suddenly disappeared in a narrow thoroughfare, leading to a well-known brasserie frequented mostly by taxi-drivers. He entered and instinctively passed behind the bar to a narrow staircase. On the landing it was very dark.

He suddenly discerned a dark shape and something cold and pointed laid its muzzle on his stomach. He didn't move, but waited. A voice from above said: "That's all right, Marius, it's Francis." The muzzle moved, and a thin voice said: "I'm sorry, chum."

Igor smiled in the darkness and groped for the stairs. At last he reached the top. A door opened, and he was ushered in. The room was a derelict office, probably used from time to time by the accountant of the brasserie. A naked bulb covered by a sheet of newspaper was the only source of light.

A small man, with thick spectacles tied with string, stretched towards Igor a hand ornamented marble-like by swollen veins and said with a melodious voice: "Welcome, brother. I'm Cyril." Igor looked around, into the concentrated gaze of several pairs of eyes.

A mixed bag, he thought; a few workers of various ages, one of them almost a boy; two women, one of whom seemed in the dim light very beautiful; then there was a stout man with a nose covered by small pimples and two well-dressed men in immaculate afternoon suits; in the corner sat Stettin, his tie and collar meticulously arranged. He didn't give any sign of recognition, and so Igor sat down in the opposite corner, from where he could observe the conference. His guide revealed himself to be a middle-aged individual with a sonorous, slightly nasal voice and a priest's collar. His left hand was crippled, yet not without dexterity.

These men were delegates to various organisations in the city who came together in order to coordinate the activities of the various underground organisations. Igor understood that they represented almost all parties of the former political set-up, including the Army and Navy. He had known that there had been negotiations between former opponents and that a united National Liberation Front was almost signed. The opposition against their common enemy was growing throughout the country, and a few months ago an agreement had been reached between them and General Lehman. Still, what was the purpose of such a meeting here? And there, the small man with the thick glasses—where the dickens did I meet him before? Igor searched his memory, but it did not work.

At last the little man came back towards him and said with his warm voice: "We two have met before, or haven't we?" And then, with a flash, it all came back to him: the warm spring evening ten years back, the huge crowd, tens of thousands of tiny heads like sand on a beach—and this small figure haranguing from a lorry. So it was he . . . Cyril. So they did not get him after all.

"Brothers," said Cyril, "I have called this meeting because of

important political developments which must be dealt with at once, and I am glad to see among us a friend from the mountains. As probably some of you will know already, this morning a National Committee of Illyria was formed in London."

CHAPTER V

WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN LONDON

DR. BRUYL lived in a small flat on the first floor of a house in Camden Town. Out of the windows one could overlook the dark silent water of the canal cutting through this part of the town like an open vein; from time to time a barge puff-puffed through the quiet water and during the summer a pair of wild ducks found a place fit to raise their family. A bombed church overlooked the square, and a trio of petrol pumps stood in front of a deserted garage with bits of posters fluttering in the wind. From a fish-and-chips shop below came the smell of stale fat, and a row of children, munching the hot potatoes, was eternally crowding the pavement.

Dr. Bruyl liked the house. It was so much London, as he said, much more so than the strange township of Hampstead where the majority of refugees lived. "You do need a passport from the British Consul there, don't you?" said Mrs. Clapson, his landlady, during one of their cheery talks.

Mrs. Clapson took it into her head to teach the old man English. "Now come on," she would say, "not 'sisle.' Thistle. Just put your tongue between yer teeth, like this: th, th." Dr. Bruyl obeyed, but the results were poor.

"Such a learned gentleman," Mrs. Clapson used to say to Mrs. Mackay, her bosom friend, "but he can't get the hang of it."

Dr. Bruyl did not mind these occasional educational attempts of Mrs. Clapson. He seemed to have infinite patience indeed. He had patience with people, with life in general, even with time.

"I like being old," he said once to Nemir, when the latter regretted his past happy days. "I liked being young, too, and I loved my manly years. But being old, why, you seem so detached and the years slip by and spring always returns. Some ten years ago I was afraid that I wouldn't have enough time, but now, somehow, I feel that I can wait and let things come to me instead of trying to catch

them. Yes," he would say, sipping the excellent coffee his Magdalen was cooking on her percolator, whose blue flame danced on the table, "this is the secret of successful life: to know how to wait."

Nemir disagreed violently; he had been a fighter all his life, knew many a prison inside out. After the Great Strike he had got five years, two of which he actually had to spend in the notorious Cortero caves, before the amnesty came. To wait, ho, that was not his line. If only he could speak English! But there was no hope for Nemir.

By now he had given up all desire to learn the language of his hosts; of course he would have liked to, but he was one of those characters who were simply unable to express themselves in any tongue but their own.

It was not the same with Lubomir Bratiu, the peasant leader. Tenacious by his peasant origin, Bratiu had a fantastic capacity for work. It was said that he worked round the clock learning English, eight, nine hours a day, translating for himself English papers into Illyrian, looking out unknown words in the dictionary, learning them by heart and then retranslating the text back into English. Bratiu had a square head and an aquiline nose. He bore his shoulders as if there was a great burden on them; and indeed there was: all the misery of the landless Illyrian peasant.

Both Bratiu and Bruyl had been residents in London for a longer period, having arrived before the war; the atmosphere in Oliville was not too healthy for any of them. Cromin, the leader of the powerful Agrarian Party, was an implacable enemy of Bratiu, and by a clever intrigue he had almost got his adversary into gaol. Bratiu had to flee, and to his great amusement his former enemy had to follow him to England.

Sebastian, who at first had sought the collaboration of every reactionary in the country—which meant especially the powerful Agrarian Landlord's Party—had by and by discarded all his collaborators in a bid for dictatorship, which finally succeeded in his agreement with the Germans during the collapse. With industry dominating agriculture there was nothing else left for Cromin but to get out, which he did.

Now the three men speculated on what would be the next move in the muddy waters of Illyrian politics in exile.

"You just watch Sir Andrew," said Nemir, picking his teeth with a match he had shaped for this purpose with his pen-knife. "He certainly does not let himself be got down."

"I have been watching him long enough," said Dr. Bruyl, "and

my opinion of him has not changed. A capable man. Very capable. Capable of anything. But how he'll get out of this I do not know."

"Is it true that he actually approached you?" asked Bratiu, but the old man shook his white head: "Possibly he thought of it. But he soon knew that I would not join the dance of the moth around the lamp. I prefer to leave political ambitions to Sir Toby." Sir Toby Belch was that well-known professor of Political Economy in the University of Oliville, now at the Mediterranean Institute. In spite of his belly and a shining red nose, the seemingly jovial man was definitely a person to reckon with.

"For what purpose can such a 'committee' serve? I do not see any such purpose," continued Dr. Bruyl. "Not yet, at least. To voice the wishes of the Illyrian people? How can we, here in London?"

"Here you are mistaken, Bruyl," said Bratiu. "The day shall come—especially before one country is liberated—when it will be absolutely necessary for our people to have a voice in the Council of our Allies; otherwise we will be occupied just like a colony and the wrong men will be called upon to take charge. Even now, much could be done; take the case of Lehman."

"Right you are," said Nemir angrily, "especially in view of the activity of the gentlemen in Kensington. I am always telling Fabian that with his withdrawing from all the activity, all that waiting and jockeying for position has done us no good. I think we ought to go to it and cut through all those intrigues."

"As if that was so easy," said Bratiu. "It's no good setting yourself up as a committee unless they're willing to recognise you. And in order to be recognised, well . . . just think of what happened to the Republicans in Spain. To a duly elected Government by the People. What good was their mandate? Franco had the power and the others just stood by. Unwillingly? Don't tell me."

"Now, now," said the old man, "don't get unduly pessimistic, Lubomir. As Bismarck said—and he ought to have known—you can do almost everything with bayonets except sit on their points. Nobody can fool all the people all the time. And sooner or later even Sir Andrew will find out. Only it will take some time."

Here Dr. Bruyl was right. Sir Andrew was not a man to give up easily. Of course, the game was up for a while and, skilled diplomat that he was, he realised that the direct way he took was premature. The surprise sprung on him from an unexpected quarter made him think; he could not have guessed the real motive of the impasse, for Fabian kept mum about the source of his information.

Yet Sir Andrew knew that his attempt to grab the destiny of Illyrian affairs into his own hands had been far too clumsy and open. No, that was not the right way.

One cannot do such things without proper backing by public opinion. Public opinion meant the Press. Just recall what happened to Samuel Hoare at the time of the Abyssinian crisis; in spite of the fact that he was an Englishman he was chucked out by the united efforts of the Press caliphs. On the other hand, were there not powerful interests among the Press with an eye on the Continent? Wasn't there a Press Lord who almost became king of a Central European country after the first world war? Of course, he refused. But the truth is that the crown was offered to him.

Well, now, that peer was interested in Hungary. Is there not somebody similar with interests in Illyria, he wondered? Suppose we did approach Lord Easterfield, owner of the *Daily Echo* group, for protection, would he accept? That depends.

His Lordship controlled the A.A., the Adriatic-Aegean Shipping Company. Practically half of Illyrian shipping had been under his control; shipping and rail-traffic are competitors. That means that Lord Easterfield could not have been exactly in love with the Sebastian-Malvolio set as long as it existed.

Certainly his Lordship would be interested in the future of Illyria. Easterfield's support would mean not only the seven National papers he controlled, but also the backing of the Phoenix Bank. And the backing of the Macconochie Press in the U.S.A.; Sir Andrew knew that there was some sort of a tie-up between the *Daily Echo* group and the famous chain of newspapers in the States.

Woodrow C. Macconochie Junior, son of the famous Press Magnate, was now in London. Sir Andrew had met him before, for this was not his first mission in Europe, though indeed his first as Secretary of the U.S. Mediterranean Society. Before that, he had been here as the ambassador of the almighty Woodrow C. Macconochie Senior, who, although over eighty, still kept the reins of his mighty newspaper Trust firmly in his hands.

The association of this sixty years old Junior with his Lordship had, however, little to do with newspapers, for Easterfield knew well that the British Press was jealous of its independence of foreign chains. His links with Woodrow C. Macconochie were common interests in oil, shipping and films.

Anglo-American collaboration had been his Lordship's old hobby; here was a chance to put it into practice, and as far as the situation in the Mediterranean was concerned, his Lordship acquiesced in

advance in a joint interest. Yes, one could not stop the American century, and the Maconochie Press influence was not negligible in the States, especially in view of the Presidential elections. For Sir Andrew's purposes, the support of His Lordship would mean also a mighty link with the U.S. public opinion. Yes, Lord Easterfield was the right man. But how to approach him? Via the Mediterranean Institute, where Sir Toby Belch was lecturer? It seems, indeed, that the best way to Lord Easterfield was via good old Toby Belch, who had his Lordship's son as a member of one of his classes.

This is how a lunch between Sir Andrew and Sir Toby came about. The "*Lys Rouge*," where it took place, is one of those fashionable places near Piccadilly where the powerful of this world like to take their food without the grandeur of Claridge's or the Ritz, guarded by a wall of high prices.

Sir Toby had a weakness for good cooking, but he knew how to exploit it. One can buy men with a good dinner or lunch; with Sir Toby such a thing was hardly possible: the dinners and lunches had to be in the plural. Sir Andrew often wondered how the professor managed to eat so well and expensively so often, with his income limited by the circumstances of exile. As he saw him digging his knife and fork into the indeed exquisite *entrecôte*, which the man ate with the air of a connoisseur, his amazement grew. The Burgundy was of correct temperature and sparkled in the light. In the street there was a yellow fog, but inside the "*Lys Rouge*" the air was warm and agreeable.

Sir Toby, though by nature talkative, did not like to speak during meals; it distracted his mind from the pleasure of eating. Sir Andrew sighed and bided his time. At last the other man wiped the sweat off his forehead and smacked his lips. The moment seemed ripe for the little talk. Carefully, he began to approach the subject with Sir Toby, taking a rather cautious attitude.

They spoke of wine, of the swiftly moving train of events, they spoke of Sir Toby's work at the Institute. Sir Toby liked his work; he hoped that one day there could be an Anglo-Illyrian Fellowship established to promote relations between the two countries. Of course, when the political situation had been stabilised.

This seemed the clue for Sir Andrew: stabilisation of relations, that was it. Would Sir Toby help to do this? After all, at the moment there were troubles ahead, but if influential British circles could be contacted. . . .

Sir Toby waved his hand. Surely his friend Sir Andrew would have more and better contacts than his poor self. However, step by

step Sir Andrew explained that in his capacity as Envoy, his relationships were more limited than those of a private individual. Every step he took was more or less considered official; Sir Toby, however, could help much if an informal meeting could take place between himself and Master John Langdon, Lord Easterfield's son. After all, his Lordship's interests in the Mediterranean were not to be scoffed at. Could this be arranged? Old fox, that Sir Toby, reflected Sir Andrew. Plays himself down, pretends to be modest. All right, let's talk about the Anglo-Illyrian Fellowship.

"Do you know that Master John Langdon is actually learning Illyrian? A difficult language for an Englishman, but his interest is so deep that it overcomes all difficulties," said Sir Toby.

Sir Andrew was most pleased. That meant that Lord Easterfield thought of the situation with acute interest. These English have long patience, he mused. The War has not yet approached its culmination point and yet hundreds of them are already learning Polish, Serb, Hungarian, Illyrian—just to be in the know for the time when personnel will be necessary for Embassies, Legations, Consulates—and Anglo-Illyrian Fellowships.

Slowly, slowly the talk slipped towards the intended goal, with Sir Toby manœuvring between cultural and naval interests. The point, it seemed, was that Lord Easterfield could hardly be expected to pull his full weight in Illyrian affairs with the situation as it was—the Illyrian Merchant Navy, with so much of his money in it, plying in the Mediterranean in the service of the enemy. If a way could be found. . . .

Sir Toby sounded carefully as to whether Antonio's position was so important; to Sir Andrew it seemed that it was. Unless another point of attraction could be found, Antonio was to be reckoned with. Point of attraction, thought Sir Toby, yes, maybe there is one. For instance, the Duke; something could be done with him. But he didn't mention this.

Instead, he said to Sir Andrew: "Are there any ways and means to communicate with the Admiral? Surely a formation of such a body would be important enough for him to reconsider his point of view—and in such a case things would move automatically, or wouldn't they? Antonio is a patriot—not a collaborator of the kind of General Sebastian." He finished his coffee and slowly lit a cigar.

Sir Andrew toyed with the spoon: These matters were very delicate indeed. Contacts are difficult, maybe his colleague in Lisbon could do something. Though this is rather risky. What does Captain Valentine think?

Sir Toby giggled: "He thinks he would be a good Minister of Shipping, when the time comes."

Sir Andrew looked at his watch: "That remains to be seen. I will do my best in any case. I can take it for granted that his Lordship will not disagree if I indicate to the Duke that it would be advisable to invite his Lordship—and yourself, of course—to an informal tea some time at the end of this week. In the meantime I will contact my friends in Lisbon.' It would be good if you impressed on your pupil that the situation must not be delayed. There are influences which are inimical to the smooth running of our affairs . . . you just watch the movement on the Stock Exchange."

Sir Toby whistled between his teeth and his nose glowed a trifle deeper red: "I did not think of that. . . . You mean Malvolio?"

The Ambassador shook his head: "I didn't mention any names."

When they left and Sir Andrew sat down in his taxi, he was pleased with himself: not a bad diplomatic move, this lunch. Of course, not the last one, but things will move now. This afternoon I shall ring the Duke, besides, maybe Northwick has not sold yet; if so, never mind, it will be possible to buy later, when Easterfield begins his barrage, the papers will go up and up. The most important thing is right timing, yes the timing. And we will know when to start.

And so it happened that the formation of the Illyrian National Committee came to an impasse. There were so many interests clashing that it seemed hardly possible for an agreement to be made between them.

The happenings inside the present British Cabinet have never been disclosed, but it must be assumed that Labour was not willing to let matters pass without any trouble, and therefore Mr. James Harrison's temperature dropped several points when announcing to Sir Andrew that he was advised to state that at this moment the formation of the Illyrian National Committee should be considered with the utmost care.

Sir Andrew was ready for it and met this polite reply with a not less polite one, mentioning the full agreement of all responsible Illyrian politicians. Why not? To-morrow Lord Easterfield would come and matters would be settled quickly. After all, Harrison was merely a puppet, and when one knew how to pull strings. . . . Well, that would be a blow to good old Malvolio.

But good old Malvolio was not to be taken aback. There he sat, in the quiet brown panelled room in the City, surrounded by papers

and secretaries, in his old jacket, peering into the papers quoting this afternoon's closing prices. . . .

There was little activity in Industrials. Among the Internationals registered was a considerable drop of Olivia Steel from 17½ to 13¾. Though it looked as if the situation would be increasingly consolidated, there had been several large sales which. . . . Yes, among them were sales of Sir Andrew.

Malvolio sighed: What a game. How long had he been playing it? Thirty-five years; sometimes one gets tired of it. What for? One doesn't need money. The whole thing is done much more for the excitement, for the thrill of it. For power. I don't care for power, I don't care for money. Still, there is a kind of magic in it, magic which no outsider can understand. Humans are nothing but puppets, and if one knows how to pull the strings, very, very subtle strings, invisible to them, very well. . . .

Take, for instance, Sir Andrew. He, too, thinks that he can pull strings; well, let him think it; let him have enough rope and he will hang himself. He desires to play shipping against steel—that is not a bad move. With the Duches thinking that she can marry one of her daughters into the lordly family, that is quite a combination. The world is very small and one has one's little contacts, too. No secrets for us, we have our own secret service. Take, for instance, these fools at "Unity House." How they have bitten on to the bait, with so much noise; they have no feeling for the subtlety of the game. Now they are running a campaign in the Left Press, directed against Olivia Steel; asking the R.A.F. to bomb Oliville's factories which are working for the Germans. . . . As if this would be of any use. Are they doing it as a matter of principle or in order to satisfy that pocket-Lenin—Fabian? It might be that it is nothing but another string of intrigues, but whatever it is, Olivia and the rest of Illyrian papers are going down, down; very good, boys, just go on like this, in a few days this is to stop. We shall buy, as we have been buying, slowly and carefully, what we can at the lowest price. Then, whizz bang, we shall announce the dividend. Why not? With the majority of the shares in our hands it will go anyway from one pocket into another. Just let us imagine these faces! Yes, it's fun.

But besides, one has an empty life. This morning in the tram I saw a mother with two small children. One of the children had a dirty nose and sniffed continuously. How to express it, this terrible sadness one felt in one's heart? Thirty-five years of this game. How many mothers and children has one on the end of one's strings? I'm getting old, I'm afraid. Sentimentality is no good in my business,

just as it would be silly in the case of a bomb-aimer. He tries to hit his target, I am trying to get mine. What is my target! Well, something not more futile or silly than his. That's human life.

Illyrian Four Percent. is just good for wall papering. Wall papering, that's what I did once, remember, in Belgrade, with that little Serb girl; we had a small flat at Marulicev Terg, she had steel blue eyes and long streams of black hair, it went down almost to her heels; what was her name; Marica something. Don't know, it happened such a long time ago, we were very happy and I wanted to marry on my salary; I was a fool, I lost my job and left her as I had to return to Oliville; this started my fortune—or was it a fortune? Forty years ago. It isn't true any more, like picture postcards from grandmother's book.

Illyrian State Loan, you can have two for a half-penny, but you wait, in a fortnight's time there won't be any on the market.

As far as Easterfield is concerned, Sir James Bowhill must take care of that. After all, one is a foreigner and so one's only concern must be to keep out of British affairs. It would be sad indeed if the I.A.T. did not know how to deal with his Lordship. If one has a few newspapers, one likes to feel oneself a kingmaker. Though one need not go so far as that Lord who wanted to become King of Hungary—or did the Hungarians want to offer the Crown of St. Stephen to him? Never mind. What on earth am I doing here? I am getting old and sentimental. Let us get back to business. It is necessary to keep an eye on Easterfield and on Fabian. And on that careerist, Sir Andrew. Enjoying themselves nicely, aren't they?

They were. Instead of the the tête-à-tête envisaged by Sir Andrew, there was quite a party at the quiet house at St. James' Square, with Lord Easterfield's photographers sliding in between everybody who was anybody. How good it is to be a Press-lord, thought Sir Andrew. There, seven national papers in his hairy fist, ranging from true-blue to pink-almost-red. That's true tolerance; on the other hand, it's cunning, too. Whatever the wind, there is always at least one flag flying. Seven independent newspapers with seven independent editors, all here. Flashbulbs flashing left and right; there, His Highness, glass in hand, rubbing shoulders with Peggy Mills, the actress. Aristocracy and Art, we are living in the age of democracy, never mind about Peggy's mother being a greengrocer.

Her Highness, with her simple black lace—how many peasant women blinded their eyes to produce that beautiful lace?—with a magnificent supphire brooch; what a shot for the *Mode*, the

Elegance, and other papers under Lord Easterfield's control. And the Princesses, how sweet, how graceful, how elegant. Cecilia, Marie and Edith; Marguerite excused herself, she was far too busy during the term.

Lord Easterfield strides up and down in front of them. He seems to be enjoying himself. A strange man—he is probably the tallest specimen among those present, six feet two, with an oblong head and ash-blond hair. The same ash-blond hair is creeping out of the cuffs of his shirt.

Yes, in these hairy fists rests the future of Illyria, thinks the Ambassador, listening to the never-ending stream of chatter of Lady Marsden, an enthusiastic dabbler in politics: Federal Union, all just one big family, Christian brotherhood, and so on. Good God. Well, anybody is entitled to his opinion; Federal Union might be useful one of these days. The Cardinal, of course, does not like the idea, isn't it so, Your Eminence? I thought so. For him, sovereignty rests with God and His Church. Nevertheless, he quarrelled with almost everybody while in Oliville, and if we have him here, it will certainly not be only for patriotic reasons.

But let us get away from political dabblers, better take a glass of port and join the circle round Lord Easterfield. Swish swish go two flashlights, his Lordship makes a small movement with his head and the photographers disappear like two well-trained dogs. I'd like to know why Easterfield insisted on making this into such a Vanity Fair instead of the small tête-à-tête which I imagined. What huge hands the man has! He is what one would call an English eccentric. His family were knighted by Richard Coeur-de-Lion, so he thinks he does not need to stick to any aristocratic prejudices. Lord Easterfield moves quickly, his huge bulk making the tea-cups rattle against each other; he talks in an unending stream. A clever man.

The Duke, politely propped up in an easy chair, is angry with himself—indigestion again.

Where is that youngster, Master Langdon? Ah, there, drinking with little Princess Edith. She looks beautiful with her bluish-black hair and huge eyes and her English has a charming accent. Easterfield junior almost spills his whisky as he looks at her.

Seems that Mama's net is working. There, the Duchess stuck her elbows into his ribs: Don't look there. The Duke is angry. "Leave me in peace, Mama, I know what I'm doing."

"Freedom of the seas," says his Lordship, pointing out with his finger. "That has been the trouble in the past." Freedom of the seas, smiled Sir Andrew inwardly, yes, we know that. We used to

call it *Pax Britannica*. But we must listen. His Lordship has gone over to another topic: Small States. Not much good, says his Lordship. On the other hand, Federal Union would not work. Aha, thought Sir Andrew, now comes the middle way, compromise and so on, we knew it.

But no, Lord Easterfield has different plans. Monarchy. Democratic constitutional monarchy. What is good for the British would certainly not be bad for South-Eastern Europe. True, it would be difficult to find a sovereign over there with so many conflicting interests. The Hapsburgs are out of the question—the Czechs would never agree and there would be trouble with the Croats and Serbs, who fear their old claims. But if a family with sufficient prestige could be found, if a man could be established, integral and honest, well. . . .

God, what a man, thought Sir Andrew, and I wondered why he came with his photographers and flashlights! He certainly has imagination, a kingmaker, indeed. But hark, he goes on: "Of course, it would be necessary to consolidate the new ruling house by a suitable addition of English blood. The Mediterranean countries and England have strong bonds of friendship. How much stronger could these bands become if they could be complemented by ties of blood."

So he wants to try and make that feeble-minded scarecrow of a Duke into the ruler of some kind of Austro-Hungarian Empire. that cannot be from *his* head. No, there are the nimble fingers of Duchess Viola in it. Look at her eyes; there is fever in them, they are dark and hard. What a woman. I for certain would not like to have been her husband. How did she manage it? God knows, but the man has been well chosen, he has imagination and certainly likes to play for high stakes. We thought that what mattered was shipping and nothing else, but he goes for his shipping pretty obliquely—via the whole of the Balkans. Where stands Malvolio? Is his Lordship strong enough to brave the I.A.T.—or does Malvolio know about the whole idea?

Sir Andrew almost thought that he did not, for the Duchess liked to have her little secrets which she sprang upon her best associates. Amazing, these British, they are not yet halfway through the war and they already prepare what they are going to do after they have won.

Yes, there is quite a chance that the plot will succeed, even if the I.A.T. does not give its blessing. Easterfield's papers have considerable weight, and many Tories will give the project their blessing in advance. They do not know what is happening to Europe and are

dead scared of the Russians. Besides, there is Washington. Washington has a weakness for European aristocracy; they're worried about Bolshevism. A good, democratic constitutional monarchy—well, Prince Kuno and Bruno are there, well instructed, I am sure.

Hats off to the Duchess, she has done it surprisingly well. Sir Andrew regretted again that he did not go to Paddington Station that day—for she is not likely ever to forget it. The wind is going to change now, decidedly, he contrived, and with this conception in the Press, one might expect the Ducal family to get political support everywhere.

Now, the Easterfield Press is going to take up the line of the Labour attack: bomb Oliville, bomb Sebastian, bomb Olivia Armaments. How happy the Labour boys will be about that unexpected support. Poor unsuspecting dears. It has been all cleverly tied up, and whatever manœuvre the I.A.T. or Malvolio might try against a concentrated attack on popular lines of bomb-this-or-that, it will be difficult to retort. Yes, they will have to climb down.

Good that one has a key position—not easy to circumvent. But it will be necessary to take proper safeguards, for when the Duke is recognised he may try to get rid of one. The old Duchess is too clever to do it. I think that family ties would be the best, and it will have to be done in time; now. He would not fight his own brother-in-law, not him. In the South, family ties are strong.

Yes, it is time for me to say what I could not say last time. Sir Andrew finished his glass with this resolution and put it down. We are getting on.

We are getting on, thought the Duchess. The time will come when we will be able to discard this sissy of an Envoy. If one thinks of his behaviour during those first days, it's enough to make one blush with anger, even though it happened a long time ago. To treat an Orsino like that! Then comes this hint about a proposal; true, his family is one of the oldest in Illyria, dating to Roman ancestry in direct line; but we have some pride, too—and if this man thinks he can utilise the bad situation his Duke was in for such blackmail, we will pay him back.

Besides, in these days one cannot say how far one can get Marguerite to go. She had a pretty hard head; last time when she was in London there was such a clash that it took all one's diplomatic education to restrain oneself from rash steps.

The girl actually said that she wanted to live her own life. She

did not want to go to Church to Communion, and when questioned about her contacts in Oxford, she refused to answer. The Duke was too weak to take her in hand—he should have done it; after all, he's the head of the house.

But never mind, this headstrong attitude of Marguerite's will be good when we are confronted with this marriage-broker Aguecheek. The Duchess had a strong religious streak in her soul, and Lord Easterfield's design, which she saw clearly, appealed to her not only from the family point of view, but also because she saw in monarchy the God-sent order of things.

The Duke was intelligent enough to understand the subtle game played around him and he felt himself rather a puppet. God, if one could only tear oneself away from one's fate! When he was a child, he used to look across the wall of their garden near Port Sol at happy dirty little boys playing in the dust of the road. What was it they played, yes, no wit was necessary to recall it, a game of buttons, shining silver and golden ones.

One day he cut three buttons from his new sailor suit and threw them over the wall. What a scramble! How Mama raged when he came to tea without them, . . .

I have never grown up, thought the Duke, and now my hair is turning grey. Pocket Napoleon, that's about all I have become in these years. Now they want me to marry. Yes, even such a private thing has been turned to some interest or other. Lord Easterfield thinks it would be good for his South-European set-up. Some kind of benevolent monarchy. What happened to that Italian Duke who was made King of Croatia without asking the Croats? He was shot at and his general aide-de-camp was killed. Pretty prospects for one's future. If there were anybody in one's entourage one could trust. . . . But no, except for animals like good old Martin, there is simply nobody. What a tangle! The only thing left to me if the worst comes to the worst will be to call that man Fabian. Everybody against everything and poor me in the middle. And I thought that Easterfield might help me; poor me.

The Duke got up and walked back to good old Peggy, Art and Aristocracy always went quite well together. She may be stupid, she probably is, but maybe that is just why she will not take much notice of such little things as a receding chin, a voice far too high pitched, wrinkles around the eyes, hair turning grey—and a hand slipping from time to time inside one's coat. On the contrary, she'll be impressed by the thought of sleeping with a Duke. As long as one continues to pay, one can be safe, which is at least something.

And so, through the helter skelter of the conflicting interests, the pattern of a political design emerged. Next day, all seven national newspapers controlled by Lord Easterfield appeared full of photographs and articles. Messrs. Lubock and Lubock, the landlords of the quiet little house at St. James' Square, certainly ceased to worry, for it was clear that there was a man being carefully groomed for a great future.

Lord Easterfield's plans were really grandiose and even *The Times*, a paper not usually too credulous, significantly devoted quite a lot of column space to the reception of His Highness Duke Orsino of Illyria; this meant that there were realistic elements which realised the necessity of welding the small European countries together under a more auspicious House than that of the Hapsburgs.

The Duke lent himself passively to all the necessary formalities. After all, that was his vocation, and he knew how to appreciate publicity. It was good to bathe in flashlights, it was as if one took a swim in the moonlight after a long ride through the desert. A forgotten ruler is the most pitiful sight in the world. A Duke who has not sufficient money to pay his rent or buy a new morning coat for his butler. A Duke without credit. Now who says without credit? There, things go incredibly well. Phoenix has given in, and one will be able to buy that little house in Sevenoaks even without Sir Andrew. As long as I can keep some private life—and in this I shall succeed; Mama is getting old, too old to watch me the whole time, why should she mind? It will be necessary to establish something of an administration—later on, when we have consolidated. Curio is eager to run an army—but isn't it a bit premature? So far the Committee is not formed and consists of private persons only. Including the Duke as a private person. Depends on what the English will want us to become. There is no other choice at the present.

Yes, His Highness's stock was going up. One by one the Illyrians in London came to pay him homage. Captain Valentine was among the first to do so, and he came with his old friend Sir Toby. Yet Toby had another card in his pocket, a card by name of Malvolio.

Surely, he said to himself, that old gambler will not be so stupid as to permit such an edifice to be built against himself. The I.A.T. could brush aside all that newspaper poppytalk about bombing factories in Illyria, though it would have been easy for Sir James Bowhill to have the papers of the B.A.N.—British Associated Newspapers—which were under the indirect control of the I.A.T., to turn the pike round. No, nothing of that kind had happened except for the Labour papers which went on printing manifestos from their Illyrian comrades.

That meant that Malvolio was quite happy about the situation as it stood and was not too keen to have a hand in the soup until it seemed ready for his consumption. The point was—did he or did he not know the magnificent idea of Lord Easterfield? It would be futile to try and get it out of the man; besides, Sir Toby hated tee-totallers in general and if financiers, then in particular; there were no lunches to be got out of Malvolio, and if any, then vegetarian ones.

But it was clear that Sir Andrew was about to fade out of importance rapidly now and it would not be so bad to have the projected Anglo-Illyrian Fellowship financed—or co-financed—by Malvolio and the I.A.T. It might be even more than that, it might develop into a platform where Sir James Bowhill and Lord Easterfield could meet. If this happened to suit old Malvolio's plans, Sir Toby Belch would create for himself a wonderful position far above anything that could be hoped for from Sir Andrew's favours.

Besides, the Anglo-Illyrian Fellowship could be of great importance for national policy in general, as an advisory body to the B.B.C., or, maybe, there would even be the prospect of a political career; Sir Andrew might cherish dreams about the post of Foreign Secretary of such a provisory council, but as the dice lay, nothing was going to happen without the approval of the Kingmaker Easterfield.

The only point was to know how far Sir James and the Kingmaker were in accord. If one could find out the right horse, betting would be easier. Sir Andrew wanted to bet on shipping, but stakes seemed to be immeasurably higher now; the right bet must be Money, for whatever was going to happen, it would not happen without Money; the man with the key to the purse could be only Malvolio.

When he appeared in the quiet panelled office in the City, his plans were prepared and he knew well what he wanted. The small man behind the desk measured him with what seemed lidless eyes.

But Sir Toby was not to be intimidated. He knew his worth and he was determined on pulling off the deal. Malvolio listened to the other's proposals with his usual restraint. It was a move which fitted his own game exactly, but he did not let Sir Toby guess it; how could he—that would have given him too much of an advantage, and the price would go up. Instead, he said that he considered the proposal quite constructive, but rather premature. Would it not be better to wait for the establishment of a political body prior to beating the drum about inter-allied relations?

Sir Toby smiled: "But certainly dear friend, culture and politics cannot be divorced from each other. As a patriot, and I trust you

are a patriot"—Malvolio almost smiled—"certainly you understand that a cultural association between these two great nations would greatly ease the situation. As you know, there are at the moment some difficulties. An Anglo-Illyrian Fellowship could be a platform for the meeting of all those interested in such a bettering of relations, and its establishment would mean a deed of great political importance."

Here I talk, thought Sir Toby, as if I were in front of a dead fish. Come on, I will not speak plainer, just show your cards. I am bored stiff with these phrases. Suddenly he sat up under the impact of the gentle voice which threw a pointed javelin against his carefully thought out plan: "You are at the wrong address, dear friend," said Malvolio. "Cultural and political relations have nothing to do with me. Or better still, I have nothing to with them. That's much more in Sir Andrew's line. What do you expect a merchant of death to do with culture? That's what I am; please do not worry about my being offended. Now tell me, why have you decided to speak to me?"

Sir Toby felt as if on hot charcoal. This was indeed unheard of and unfair on top of it. But what could one do now? The lidless eyes looked into his face with a blank expression.

Old routiner he was, Sir Toby blushed like a girl. "Well," he said, "I must explain. You know my feelings towards my country. And you know, too, that many of our friends do not share them. There is nothing I could say about the integrity of Sir Andrew, but when I heard that he was in touch with . . . certain shipping interests in our beloved fatherland, via Portugal . . . don't you understand, Sir?"

"Understand what," asked the enigma behind the desk colourlessly, "what precisely do you want to imply? Do you want to say that our Envoy, Sir Andrew, has been in touch with the enemy or that he only made some legal, perfectly legal deal or transaction with his colleague in a neutral country? Before you make so important an accusation against the honour of our diplomatic representative, you will certainly have some kind of proof in your hand; or am I merely misunderstanding you?"

There. Sir Toby's red nose blushed a shade deeper and faded out. Huh, what a partner to deal with. What now? Everything was broken and all pretence was lying in pieces at the feet of that small Buddha behind his desk.

Sir Toby began to retire. Well, of course not . . . It had not been his intention to imply anything of the sort . . . It must have

been a misunderstanding. Still he hoped that . . . Malvolio closed his eyes. He was tired, very tired. And bored. He pulled out his cheque book and opened his fountain-pen: "How much?"

That was about the death blow to Sir Toby. He scrambled to his feet: "Excuse me, dear friend. But I did not come to ask you for money." He was deeply humiliated and thirsty for some kind of revenge.

Malvolio's remark uncovered a weak spot; Sir Toby jumped at it: "No, I did not come for money," he shouted, "you must have misunderstood me by force of habit."

Malvolio was tired. Here I sit playing my game, thought he, and now I'm getting bored with it. Let's pull ourselves together. He straightened himself: "You are so well known for your humour," he said, "that I thought you would understand a joke. Forgive me if this was a rough one, but I have been thinking about your proposal and I think it acceptable; of course there are plenty of reasons for waiting, but the usefulness of such a platform cannot be doubted."

Yes, I think the moment has come for establishing it, he went on to himself: The game is stronger than the men. Let us continue it. The Fellowship will be established quickly—say in three weeks time we will have the first meeting. If we keep up appearances, Sir Toby will be the go-between. How Aguecheek will rage when he hears about that! There will be nothing left for him but to come to me. General Curio must be drawn into our confidence and as far as Fabian is concerned, well, they have played their little part; now they can go to hell; after all, I have given them a fair chance and it is their own mistake if they are going to miss the bus.

The rest of the interview was covered in a few polite phrases and Sir Toby went, with the slightly haughty air of an offended man. Still, one did not expect love in this game. Alone, Malvolio considered the position on the Stock Exchange: It will be necessary to build ourselves up in the next few days. Sir James Bowhill has been informed already, things are moving.

Easterfield will fall into line, his papers will play the tune once he has given his formal approval. The only difficulty will be the Bank of England, but we know how to handle that. Sir James will speak to Lord Pembroke and when the I.A.T. big guns start to thunder, well. Once the Committee is formed, the control of all holdings will slip into his hands. Therefore, let us end the Baisse, long live the Hausse.

Thus things became consolidated, especially as the seven national papers were working up their personal propaganda about the Duke and there was no opposition from anywhere. Suddenly there was diplomatic news of His Highness lunching with everybody who was anybody and paper after paper began to print publicity pictures, snapshots taken by Lord Easterfield's young boys on various occasions.

It was at such a late stage that Sir Andrew began to look around for the last possible support he could find; Labour—that meant Fabian—was the only element which did not join in the gay dance around His Highness. That hope was number one: didn't the Envoy always appear with a red carnation in his buttonhole? The second, rather fading one, was still the marriage project. If both failed—well, then one could only hold on by the skin of one's teeth, run to Malvolio and hope for the best.

As far as Fabian was concerned, he got Sir Andrew's message not without expecting it. The two left-outs should get together—or shouldn't they? No. Better not; after thorough deliberation Fabian designed a small alibi. Not necessary to offend the good man, but a red carnation was not sufficient to tie up with Socialists. Besides, Fabian, too, had his own little plans for the future, and Sir Andrew was not the one who would further them. Fabian was not at home, having just left on a visit to Scotland to see some Illyrian hostels up there. Sorry.

There remained the other possibility: at the next informal meeting with the Duke he touched on this topic, but the social temperature had dropped several degrees and this elusive, soft-chinned Pocket Napoleon felt somehow much firmer in the saddle. Still, with a little gentle pressure here and there he would have got him where he would like to have him, when, of course, Mama came in.

The Duchess was at her best now, the last few days seemed to have rejuvenated her. She knew, she said, of the tender feeling which Sir Andrew had towards her youngest daughter. A mother's eyes saw everything; and nothing would be a greater pleasure for her than to see a tender union of her House with such a distinguished suitor. However, we live in an enlightened age. Parental powers are not what they were and you know what modern girls are. Marguerite is working very hard and seems to love it, she speaks a lot about a scientific career. She is very young, still at the age when girls do not think seriously about marriage. The fairest thing will be if the proposal is put to her in a suitable form at a suitable moment. Sir Andrew could do it himself, or he could leave it to her; certainly he would not like to have any pressure applied to a modern girl.

Yes, sighed the Duchess, in her own youth things were different; but nowadays there was no such thing as children's respect for their parent's feelings and wishes. The Duchess' regrets were indeed quite genuine, though at this moment she was quite pleased with her daughter's obstinate nature. It would not do to enter into any liaison now with this good friend and one could certainly leave Marguerite to get on with her own life so far as this man was concerned.

However, in other respects she was getting rather out of hand; it would be wise to let her finish the term and recall her to London afterwards. It would be better for her to stay under her loving mother's supervision and find a suitable match. There was nothing better than happy matrimony with a man one loved. And if one did not love him at first, love came later. But this would carry them too far. At the moment things were as they were, and Sir Andrew had to put up with them. That was the result of the conversation, and there was nothing else he could do but kiss the old lady's fingertips and take his leave.

The door clicked, and the old lady straightened herself in her black afternoon frock: "Now listen, my dear," she said gravely, "your flirtation with that actress . . . what's her name . . . Peggy so-and-so, goes too far. At this moment, when things are moving to a favourable conclusion, you must evade publicity as far as possible. I think it a mistake if you forget the grave circumstances in which your person and this House are at the moment. Now I don't mind a little flirtation; why, when your Papa had his liaison with a girl called Dolores of the Ducal Ballet, I never minded. But discretion, please, discretion. That is what I miss in you most. As the English are, you can do whatever you like as long as nobody knows of it. I think that a sensible point of view and I wish you followed it more. Yes, don't frown. An old woman, like me, has seen a lot. An old woman . . ." There she starts again, thinks the Duke: Poor me.

But that was merely a personal touch in the epilogue, unless one wants to mention a casual encounter between Sir Andrew and Malvolio in the Royal Club some time later. Winter rain was beating on the windows and in the lounge only a few members sat around the fireplace. Malvolio, who had been reading *The Times*, thrust them away and said a few words of greeting to the Envoy.

Suddenly, as was his custom, he asked: "About your friend in Lisbon—got any news yet?"

Sir Andrew opened his eyes at this broadside fired in the most casual, gentle and dry voice Malvolio was able to produce; he caught

himself quickly, but too late for Malvolio's eyes. He could do nothing else but smile in reply: "Not yet, I am sorry to say."

The other man shrugged his shoulders: "Let me know when you hear something, will you?" They nodded to each other, and Sir Andrew knew that he was saved—for the time being at least.

The Illyrian Committee was formed ten days later. Duke Orsino made a speech in the B.B.C. European Service and the only significant fact was that Sir Andrew not only remained at his post of Envoy but that he provisionally managed Foreign Relations.

CHAPTER VI

THE EMISSARY

"A NATIONAL COMMITTEE?" said Igor with a whistle, "we did not know anything about that in the mountains."

"You are mistaken," said Cyril, "General Lehman knows. We have been in communication with him already about what should be done. He advises despatching an emissary to London immediately. He thinks this necessary. Blast these Nazis, we had to cut the conversation pretty short. Their listening service is very good, and lately they have mobile direction-finders on lorries. You cannot talk a lot in such circumstances."

So that's why things worked so well during my travel, thought Igor. Fancy that, the arrival of the "Czar's courier" announced by short-wave wireless. We are making progress. Things must be organised better than one would believe. And I did not know; which is just as well. How that naked bulb stings that one's tired eyes!

Igor closed his lids and listened to the vibration of the small man's warm voice. Cyril's personality had grown since that day when he changed the balance in favour of the General Strike. Igor did not know what part Cyril played in the national conspiracy, but it must have been an important one judging by the man's bearing and dignity.

His Works Council, Cyril began, was corroborating fully the opinions of General Lehman. The establishment of a representative body in London was a great asset in the struggle of millions of our people against the Occupying Power and our only aim must be to get a contact which would assure unity of purpose. . . .

Yes, thought Igor, that is true, these people in London could achieve a great deal. Just think of what General Lehman needs. Igor's mission here was called "co-ordination of supplies." There—that meant more small arms, ammunition, wireless sets, machine-guns, rare chemicals, surgical instruments. How much easier it would be to get this from England; a squadron of bombers could drop many tons of equipment. Possibly more could be achieved from there than here with all railways and loads guarded and all loads constantly checked by sentries.

What could we give in return? Information about German troop movements and their economics and morale.

Sabotage would be increased a thousandfold by the scattering of explosives and other implements.

The whole movement of national resistance against the Germans and General Sebastian's Silver Shirts could be immensely stiffened by cleverly directed propaganda. The feeling of national pride could be roused by messages of hope.

If a Free Illyria could be recognised by the Allies, this would mean a strong national front against the occupants and the local quislings. All this would mean immense advantages to the Allies.

About one-third of all the continental traffic went through Illyria's railways. Port Sol was one of the busiest ports in German war economy.

To-day, though their organisation was well forged, the patriots were on the defensive, as many people remained passive and did not want to risk their necks against General Sebastian's Gestapo-steeled hand without hope of success. How much easier it would be for them to build up a really mighty organisation if there was clear support for their cause!

Yes, such a National Committee was an extremely important weapon against Sebastian's collaborationists. It would be a great responsibility to go to London with all this at one's heart. I would not like to be the man, thought Igor.

It was just at that moment that the small man with the thick glasses finished his speech, pointing at Igor: "After taking advice from the General, the Secretary of our organisation believes Igor Duval to be the most suitable man for this job. I am putting the following proposal before the meeting: That Igor Duval be sent to London as our delegate plenipotentiary. Will any brother stand up for this motion, or are there any counter proposals?"

Igor could not believe his ears. Everything seemed so simple, so bare, the hard light of the naked bulb, sharp shadows on the dirty

paper on the walls, and there, on the ceiling was a huge spot like a dog's head from water leaking through; yes, so simple. A handful of people, some of them dirty, all of them with eyes red with sleeplessness and the smoke circling around their faces, were going to give him a mandate to speak in the name of millions.

It is like a dream, he reflected, now one of the two men in good clothes sitting in the corner is getting up. He has a deep bass voice. "I shall carry this proposal."

Where the dickens did I see this man before? It must have been years ago, thinks Igor, no, I cannot remember.

Now a woman's voice says that she seconds the proposal; everyone looks at Igor and claps their hands in approval; one's throat is very narrow, and there are tears in one's eyes, one gets up. But it is difficult to speak. What should one say? What more can one be than a vessel in which the hopes for freedom of one's fatherland are carried to our country's Allies? It is pathetic how a fragile individual can be transformed into a trustee of millions.

All this filled Igor's breast in the few instants while he got up and faced the small audience. He saw their eyes glittering in the sharp light of the bulb. There was Cyril, looking at him with pale, short-sighted eyes behind his thick glasses. It was very quiet, and a trembling voice said slowly: "Brothers, I accept."

Strange, thought Igor, that was my own voice. Yet it seems as if somebody else has spoken for me.

There, Cyril offers a handshake, he has a warm, dry palm similar to that of a blind man, with a strange, soft touch. Caressing fingers, one would say. Now to work.

It was past midnight but the job began. It was necessary to compile a message to the British and to the National Committee. Then it was necessary to agree on a programme of action.

From now on the fight inside and abroad must be co-ordinated. A code must be decided upon.

There would be scores of things Igor would have to learn by heart, but there would be a lot of things he would not be able to confide to his memory. There was a small place available with all necessary implements to prepare the necessary documents; Cyril would see to that.

The lame man in the priest's collar sat down beside Igor and whispered that they had decided to put Igor up either at Cyril's or at his own place while all preparations would be made.

Then the discussion really started; it must be very late, Igor was tired. I have nothing to say, this is their show, he mused. My say will come when I get to London. Then and there I shall have to

speak—for them. I ought to refresh my English. It is a long time since I was there. As a student, in the late 'twenties.

“Is the composition of the National Committee already known?” asks one of the men in railwayman’s kit. Here the huge bulk of Stettin surges forward: “We do not know yet. The radio said only that a National Committee had been formed by Duke Orsino XV. The speech by the Duke has been taken down. Here it is.” The piece of paper circulates quickly round the room. Evidently the majority of delegates have already read it, for in a few minutes it has reached Igor. It ends: Long live Illyria.

Stettin frowns: “Whatever the Committee, old Malvolio sure will be in it.”

I know, thinks Igor, and not only old Malvolio. Others, too. And besides this body, many other bodies will try to send delegates there; for instance, Admiral Antonio. Maybe Sebastian himself, who knows? Only do not let us all fall asleep, it is four o’clock in the morning and there are many things to be discussed yet. The air is thick with cigarette smoke, so that even the sharp light of the bulb cannot get through it by now.

Suddenly there are steps outside and the door opens. A waitress pokes her head through the door: “Better get going, the Boche is downstairs.” She is gone.

The meeting breaks up quietly; evidently everyone has got used to these sudden alarms. They find time to shake Igor’s hand, one by one, before they slip out by the window on to the adjoining roof. The meeting-place has been cleverly chosen, there are many ways to get away.

The light had been extinguished when the black-out was torn down and the window opened, but Igor feels the huge stature of Stettin in the darkness before him. There, Stettin shakes his hand: “Good luck, brother. Do not forget us.”

How could I forget them, thinks Igor, returning the handshake, never will I forget, my Stettin. Good-bye. Suddenly they are alone in the room, there is the sure, soft hand of Cyril who guides Igor with a somnambulist’s certainty through the room out into the night. He must be almost blind, this man, and yet he walks lightly without any noise.

“Careful, there are two steps,” he whispers as they step out on to the catwalk on the roof. In front of them, like an eerie show of ghosts, are the shadows of several men walking noiselessly between the chimneys.

The night is dark, low clouds are hanging over the roofs, and Igor’s

eyes are blind with lack of sleep and the smoke and sharp light of the room. Cyril leads. In the middle of the catwalk they stop and listen.

It had been only a few seconds, but the cold night air had made Igor completely awake; slowly he began to discern the shadow of a chimney and heard the clicking of the lock. Evidently the priest had cleaned out the room so that no trace of the meeting could be discovered and now he closed the window from the outside.

They seem to have this well organised, thought Igor. The priest joined them and stopped to listen: far away one could hear the whistle of a locomotive.

Cyril turned round and slowly crawled back to the edge of the roof from where one could see both the street below and the attic window from which they had just escaped. Igor began to crawl slowly back along the catwalk. Both men leaned quietly over the guttering and watched.

From down below came the traffic noises of the boulevard and a lonely cat miowed its love-song somewhere among the maze of roofs. When listening sharply, one could hear the sound of marching feet; here and there the wind carried to them a smattering of orders and the clink of metal. A car-door banged somewhere in the street below and the whine of the motor faded slowly out in the darkness.

Cyril took off his glasses, and began to clean them with a huge handkerchief. Igor saw his silhouette, leaning on the thin railing; the man's jaws were moving as if he was chewing. Water was dropping on to metal, slowly, drop by drop, drop by drop. Time passed. Nothing happened.

"Do you think they were after us?" Igor asked, and the man replied drily: "I don't think so, though one never knows. They have occasional inspections all over the place, and this might be one of them. We'll clear out. Have you got a weapon?" Igor nodded, and the other continued: "Don't use it, unless absolutely necessary. There have been too many of us here to-night. Yet there is nobody on our track."

The group was already dispersed, only the lame man in the priest's collar was waiting by the open window yawning in the sloping roof of an adjoining building. Cyril tripped over a wire and Igor registered with astonishment how clumsy his movements had suddenly become; it seemed a strange contradiction to the cat-like sureness with which he had moved during their perilous spy-out.

Cyril chuckled; he had a dry chuckle like a hen's cry. As if he had guessed his mate's thoughts, he said: "Don't be astonished, but I

am almost blind. Still, if you had come this way as often as I, you would find your way even with bandaged eyes."

The three men climbed down a narrow ladder, finding themselves in an attic full of scrap. Broken bedsteads and the remnants of a pram loomed up in the dim light of the priest's torch like giant traps. A musty smell pervaded the attic and the floor boards creaked as they walked towards the door. Something mellow and sticky touched Igor's forehead, and his hand rubbed a dusty cobweb off the skin. He felt reassured. A heavy gate creaked gently as the priest opened it. They were on the top floor of a house, which echoed their steps like a well. Slowly they descended to the second floor.

Cyril stopped there, and he and the priest had a quick council as to where Igor was to sleep. Cyril advised that it might be best for him to stay with the priest, who evidently lived here. It might be better not to risk walking at so late an hour in the streets patrolled by police and Silver Shirts.

The priest, whose name was Father Lorenzo, fingered with his bad hand under his shirt and pulled out a small key. The lock clicked and Igor saw himself in a tiny anteroom dominated by a huge black crucifix. Several huge cloaks were hanging from a hat-stand.

Cyril stepped in with the air of a man who knew the place well, and beckoned Igor to enter into a small room which smelt of incense, while the priest busied himself in the adjoining kitchen.

They sat down on a creaking bed: "Now listen, brother," Cyril said, "this is not the time for all that; you must sleep and I shall have to go to work. During the day we shall prepare your documents. I would like you to stay at this place until nightfall. Whether or not I will be able to see you off I don't know. Probably not, and it will not be necessary. You know as well as we do what you will be facing, and do not forget that it will not be easy. How is General Lehman? I mean politically; where does he stand?" Igor understood. The underground movement in the industrial district, while fully supporting the guerillas, was still somewhat worried about the General's Conservative past. After all, 'Papa' had been educated in a military academy and after the Bolshevik Revolution his sympathies were by no means revolutionary.

"You think they will try to get round him?" he said. "No, I do not think that possible. 'Papa' would never do it. He stands by his word, he always did."

Cyril shrugged his shoulders: "My boy, when you have been in politics—and in what politics!—as many years as I, you would know that people do not act according to their convictions but only accord-

ing to their interests. That is my last word to you: do not trust anybody, for with your trust goes ours. Have you got enough ammunition for your pistol?" Igor nodded. "All right," said Cyril, and his porcelain half-blind eyes were suddenly soft: "Good-bye, brother. We trust that if anything happens to you, the documents will be destroyed first."

He got up, his small stature towering suddenly over Igor. There was a reflection on his glasses. "Good-bye," he said again, and then, at the door, he added softly: "I know that you will never betray us."

After he had gone, Igor heard him speaking in a low voice to the priest, who was cooking in the small kitchen.

Igor contemplated the large holes in the bed-cover, the pair of torn slippers half poking their heels from under the bed, the large night pot with blue ornaments under the bed-table, the cupboard full of books about theological subjects. On the wall were four or five pictures of tortured saints in coloured print, with blood streaming down their gashed bodies.

Igor shook his head and pulled out the Bible. He was an atheist, but the Bible was a fascinating book. What a jealous God that Jehovah of the Old Testament Jews was!

He was deeply engrossed in the Book of Job when Father Lorenzo appeared with a tray of two plates of oat-soup and a pot full of potatoes. He put a napkin on a creaky chair, and before they began to eat, he said a prayer. Igor waited, barely able to pacify his hunger. Finally, the priest finished praying and started digging his spoon into the thick soup. He didn't talk at all and Igor wasn't in a talking mood either.

For a while one could have heard only the sipping of the two men and the occasional clatter of a spoon on the porcelain. An old-fashioned cuckoo-clock ticking on the wall announced to the world that it was half-past five in the morning.

Father Lorenzo looked up: "You must be very tired," he said, and Igor nodded. The little priest disappeared, and when he came back there were three or four of the heavy cloaks, which had hung in the ante-room, over his bad arm. "This will keep you warm," he said.

He insisted on Igor taking the bed, and Igor was far too tired to resist for long. The tension of the day, the long travel behind him, the endless night, all fell on him like a sweet net. Somehow he found himself in the bed, huddling among the warm folds of the heavy cloaks and soon he fell asleep like a tired animal.

When he woke up, the flat was empty. It was evening again and Igor realised that he must have slept the whole day. Some food was ready on a tray, prepared for him by the old priest, and he ate voraciously. The cuckoo-clock amused itself by cuckooing the half hours during his waiting and time seemed to stand still.

At last Father Lorenzo returned with a suitcase. He didn't say much, except for a greeting and a few words of instruction. A tug was going down the River Var to Port Sol, from where a Red Cross ship was leaving the following day for Portugal.

The skipper of the tug had been informed of Ivor's arrival; the name of the tug was *Merina*, and it lay on jetty number seven.

The suitcase disclosed a docker's jacket and a corresponding identity card. Igor changed quickly. He felt rejuvenated after his long sleep, and the priest watched him with his old eyes, as he got up and brushed his hair.

The most difficult part of his journey was in front of him. Somehow he did not seem to mind. The documents were thin and rolled into a small ball. They had been carefully written in miniature letters on sheets of special membrane-like paper.

One of them was a letter officially addressed to the Duke, another was addressed to the British Cabinet, a third one to the National Committee as a whole. All were in code and Igor had to memorise it. There were a great many things to be memorised again, he saw.

He sat down and sipped some bitter acorn-extract which was a coffee substitute all over the country. The priest had brought in two steaming cups, and they both sat in silence. Igor worked hard; a newspaper-man without a good memory is not much worth in his job. Within two hours he knew what was to be known; the old priest seemed to be a specialist in instructing would-be emissaries.

He was a real mine of information, and as the evening went on, Igor's respect for the old man increased. They waited for Cyril, but Cyril did not arrive; "I thought he would not come," said the priest. "Since some cases of sabotage occurred in the railway yards, they are guarding everybody's movements far too well. The worst are the Silver Shirts; you recognise a German straight away, but a Fascist—well, that's much more difficult. The trouble is worst with the young ones. They drill them now at school."

He spoke about his efforts to educate the young in Christian spirit. Sometimes he despaired of them. It seemed as if they did not want to believe in God any more. In God who is Love. And yet, without faith, how could one live and fight? Human beings who must have some faith. They must believe in something, and now they seem to

believe in nothing. That was what Father Lorenzo thought, what he said.

Igor listened carefully: "Don't they?" he retorted. "Maybe they believe in different things, but they believe. Look at me. We are brothers, and yet I do not share your God with you. But in spite of that we serve the same cause. Never mind the name of the God; the only thing that matters is the purpose we serve. Purpose, yes, that is it. You are a Christian, father, you believe in a God who said 'Thou shall not kill'—and yet you will bless me if to-night I kill a sentry in the harbour. So what? But never mind; we fight now in the same cause. Why should we split hairs? For my faith is just as strong as yours."

It was dark outside, and the cuckoo clock sprang one of its periodical surprises from the corner where it hung. Igor prepared for leaving. He looked at the unmade bed, and though the old priest protested, he quickly arranged it.

When he went to the door, the old man stood there with his rosary around his left hand. The light under the tortured saint flickered, throwing uncertain shadows on the purple streams of blood gushing from the saint's wounds. There was a reflection of that flicker in the priest's face when he blessed the departing man.

There, thought Igor, an atheist gets his blessing. Could be a short story. But we leave that until after the war, for now, somehow, we do not see the situation as comical.

Igor's heart softened towards the old man: "Thank you, father. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye," repeated the old priest: "God will be with you."

The night had cast its shadow into the streets, full of workers rushing home. It was a good time to get away, thought Igor, as he mingled in the bustle for the tram. No such things as queues here, just a mad scramble for the car, if and when it arrived. He knew the town well and felt safe in the multitude. The tram was jammed to its utmost capacity. People were morose, sullen, silent.

Different from the old days, when the town was full of gay remarks, loud squabbles, laughter. Yes, the people had changed. They looked quite worn out, especially the women. Twelve hour shifts and bad food in inadequate quantities had begun to have its effect. The only thing which could still inspire them to their old spirit was the hope of liberation; without that hope they would perish as a nation, sure they would.

Igor read, or tried to read the newspaper which one of the

passengers had in his hands. As an old newshand he read reversed print as quickly and speedily as if it was the right way up.

"*Admiral Antonio wants to preserve the fleet in strict neutrality,*" said the headline. Antonio and Sebastian, Sebastian and Antonio, thought Igor. What a chessboard is our life. Even the traitors haven't an easy time. Sebastian and Antonio—two men who were now ruling Illyria, playing against each other from the beginning—and being played against each other by the Germans. It was a subtle game.

In the Ducal Palace in Oliville was the centre of the Silver Shirts, with General Sebastian in command.

Down in Port Sol was the fleet, consisting of the battleship "Duchess Viola", three cruisers of the "Orsino" class and some eighty or so smaller craft. The fleet was ruled by the iron hand of Admiral Antonio, its creator. There were rumours that at the moment when the armistice was signed, Antonio let all the crews swear allegiance to himself, thus securing an important victory over his rival.

With the Italian fleet as it was, the Illyrian ships were an important factor in the balance of power in the Mediterranean; had the Admiral gone over to the English or scuttled his ships, the Germans would have faced a grave disadvantage.

That was why Von Dresden, the commanding officer of the Twelfth German Army Corps which helped so much to break down Illyrian resistance by its encircling move at the lower Var, had such strong instructions from the High Command not to enter the town area of Port Sol. The Germans believed that they could get by negotiations and pressure what they could not get by force.

For Admiral Antonio was something of a mystery to everybody. Though he could trace his ancestors well into the fifteenth century, he had started his naval career as a stowaway at the age of fourteen. He was an adventurer of the old sort. If he had lived in Lombardy in the sixteenth century, he would have made a magnificent "condottiere"—one of those small nobles who were knights, brigands, butchers, murderers, subscribers to art, slave drivers, connoisseurs of beauty—all at the same time.

When little Antonio was discovered on that first trip of his, the Italians beat him up at the order of the Captain. He did not squeal, it was said, but he never forgot.

Thirty years later that Captain, who had forgotten the episode a long time ago, appeared in Port Sol. He was an old gentleman now, owner of his ship, stout and white-haired. How great was his surprise when the harbour police arrived to invite him to visit the

Admiral. He came in his best jacket, but the Admiral met him at the door just after he entered his room. "You recognise me?" he asked when the Captain entered.

The old man goggled his eyes and stuttered that he did not have the honour. So the Admiral told him and before the old man could mutter an excuse he struck him in the face, once, twice, once more and then called the guards to throw him out. This was done rather rudely and as the old Captain fell down the stairs, he broke his ankle. The diplomatic scandal which followed was smoothed out quickly, for the Italians did not consider the Captain worth the trouble. Yet the incident became known throughout the fleet and Admiral Antonio's person became more popular still.

True to his youth and his adventurer's tradition, the Admiral had served his way up throughout the Merchant Marine and later the Navy. And he never forgot the lesson nor his heavy accent, and his oratory was such that it could be understood and enjoyed by anybody who liked the sea.

During the first World War he served in the French Navy and distinguished himself in several skirmishes with the Austro-Hungarian fleet in the Mediterranean. He had pluck, and the famous exploit of the dynamite barge which blew up at the entrance of Pola Harbour in 1917 was his greatest achievement, for which he won his Croix de Guerre.

When the war ended, he returned to Illyria, but the small country was not sufficient for his ambitions. He wanted expansion, colonies, adventure.

He served the Navy and the Navy served him. Several Cabinets tried to impose on him, but the small clique of officers who were faithful to him, together with the devotion of his men, helped him to defy all these attempts and to form a successful stumbling block for the Ministers who had challenged him.

As the years went by, his influence grew; his ambition and thirst for adventure remained as it was, instead of mellowing with age. He managed to extort for his beloved Navy the highest pay and standard of life after the British Navy, and soon concentrated his sturdy hand on the Merchant Marine as well. So strong was his position, that when in 1931 Sebastian was forming his Cabinet, he took the sturdy sailor in his former position—Minister for Marine and Navy—and his Gendarmerie never entered Port Sol.

The General Strike there was put down by the Admiral's Navy Police; which had continued to rule it ever since. As a matter of fact,

Port Sol was a kind of State within the State and the Admiral was absolute ruler there.

In his magnificent palace in Port Sol he lived with his family in luxury and splendour, periodically borrowing from the local palaces and museums masterpieces of art to decorate his dining rooms and lounges.

The parties he threw were famous all over the Mediterranean; he liked music, lights, uniforms and anecdotes about himself. He was jovial, easygoing and hard as nails. He had the art of getting on with people; he managed to get on with Duke Orsino, with the old Duchess, with General Sebastian. A short time before the war, when Marshal Goering was visiting Mussolini, Antonio entertained him in his palace in Port Sol.

The two men got on splendidly, both with similar tastes, both stout and square, both brigands of the most dangerous and jovial kind. They exchanged jokes about each other's habits, they agreed on their political ambitions.

What exactly had been the topic of these discussions remained a mystery for ever. Marshal Goering's enmity for the Nazi Minister of Propaganda Goebbels was well known, and an intrigue was spun between Goebbels and General Sebastian. But still, when at last it came to a collapse, the Germans stopped short of occupying the Admiral's kingdom—whether by reason of his contacts or his fleet one could not say. Possibly it was both.

The Admiral declared that his Port was a "Free Town," that he was "officially and in fact a neutral" and continued to fly his flag as usual. His ships went about the seas relatively unmolested, because the British and the Americans were of the opinion that if added to the Germans, the small but efficient Illyrian Fleet would change the balance of power in the Mediterranean.

And so, thanks to the speculations of both belligerents, Antonio had the best of it. Port Sol was much better fed than the rest of the country and service in the Navy was a real joy. His officers were transformed into mercenaries body and soul, and they would have followed the Admiral into hell. His position vis-à-vis General Sebastian was thus very strong.

In vain did the ambitious Sebastian appeal to Von Zinzel, the German "Envoy" to Illyria, that this division of the country was a most unhappy one. Against the realistic appreciation of the situation everybody was powerless, and both sides tried to make the best of it. Vichy France reopened their Consulate in Port Sol, and thus indirect communication between Illyria and Washington was possible.

Altogether Port Sol was a sort of clearing house for Nazi Occupied Europe. From it Red Cross ships plied between German and English ports via Portugal.

Igor knew that once there, escape would be greatly eased, for the Admiral's Naval Police, though extremely efficient, did not have the same political zeal as the desperate Silver Shirts, Sebastian's creation of the last few years.

The only difficulty would be to get about the Portugese ship without any English or American money. He still had a bundle of leva notes left, but it remained to be seen whether a neutral could be bribed with levas. Yet now the most difficult problem was to get out of Oliville to Port Sol. Oliville Harbour was one of the best guarded and controlled areas in Illyria.

The street where he walked narrowed to a cul-de-sac from which a gate led to the waterfront. A guard was standing there, checking the papers of those entering. He had a tiny blue torch, which switched on and off with rhythmical movement. Like a performance of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, only without Puck, and with Sebastian, instead of Oberon as the King of the Shadows. And who, thought Igor, has the ass's head charmed on to his shoulders?

Let us be careful, please. No more comparisons.

"Your papers," said the guard drily, and Igor pretended to finger in his pockets; at last he found the identity card; the blue torch shone on to the yellow cardboard and for a moment it flashed over his face. His heart stood still, but for the guard this was merely a matter of routine, while for him it decided between life and death.

The sentry returned his identity card after stamping it. As Igor went by the Guard House, he saw the shapes of several men standing about in the mist which seemed to creep over the black asphalt. Harbour Police, it flashed through his mind; he didn't like the way they seemed to follow him with their eyes. However, they did not move, and soon he lost sight of them. The characteristic smell of stale water pervaded the air and the cold mist seemed to thicken. There was the harbour all right.

Once or twice Igor stepped behind the huge structure of a crane to let a sentry pass by. From far away one could hear the splashes of oars; a thin voice accompanied by an accordeon sung a sad folk-song which dodged its own echo among the deserted buildings.

Not much commerce at night, it seemed. The only place where there seemed to be some life left was the jetty on the opposite side; under dimmed lights hanging like single grapes on long, thin stands,

were the shadows of a dozen or so men busy loading a boat with sacks. Igor saw the huge, white piles of sacks, about which the figures of the stevedores seemed to dance a ghostly quadrille, shrouded in the pale sheets of mist.

The lapping of the water, beating in small waves against the stones of the quay, seemed to fill the space with an eerie rhythm. Igor felt something like the premonition of impending danger. But after all, one was neither a frightened child nor a superstitious old woman. After a while, he left the corner between two sheds, which had been his hide-out for the moment, and stepped into the open on the quay.

The trouble was that he didn't know exactly where Pier Seven was to be found. He had some idea about the lay-out of the jetties, but in the darkness orientation was very difficult. He drifted up and down, until at last he thought he had found the spot. There was a pier all right, with three tugs standing by. Yet soon it proved to be a dead one; the tugs were empty and lifeless like bombed-out houses.

Then Igor began to be really nervous. He had no idea of the time, but surely he must have been running around for at least one and a half hours in the maze of the inner harbour. Suddenly he saw three figures emerging from the end of the pierhead. They were sentries, he was sure, for he heard the clinking of metal. They were very close.

Escape was impossible. Igor turned back just in time to face the three men. There had been no time to run, unless one jumped into the water, which would have been rather a noisy business at that time of the night. Igor felt it better to trust his luck and pretend to be a docker.

One of the men pulled out a torch and shone it into Igor's face. The light was brilliant and Igor had to close his eyes. At that moment the man barked out his first question. An old trick, this, thought Igor, replying as well as he could. He had applied the same method several times when questioning a prisoner or persons suspected of being spies. Still, to-night he was at the wrong end of the torch.

The questioner had a strong foreign accent and a rather husky voice; German officers spoke like that, but this man wasn't a German. He seemed intelligent, too, from the way he put his questions. Igor was careful not to speak too much for the man was obviously experienced.

He didn't seem satisfied with the result of his questions and evidently considered Igor rather suspicious. After ten minutes of cross-questioning he nodded to a sturdy man standing motionlessly at Igor's

right side: "Take him away," he said in his husky voice, "and better bring him to the Harbour Police. I haven't got time, but they might have a look into his credentials."

That's the end of my travels, thought Igor, as he walked away. That is as far as I get. With a shudder he thought of Velinsky's fate. Like a procession of pictures projected by a magic lantern, he saw the faces of the people he had met in the last turbulent week. I would not betray them, he said to himself. I will stand anything the devils will do. Beating. Water torture. Even . . . maybe even the matches. They would not get the documents and, besides that, he didn't know much. Thank God. Nobody's name, except Stetun's. He shouldn't have told me his real name, deliberated Igor. He is a fool. But still, we aren't so far yet. Could nothing really be done?

He eyed the sentry walking behind him. He was a sturdy man, about forty or more, with a round pleasant face. His step was firm and rather slow. As if he guessed the prisoner's intention, he lowered his carbine towards Igor's back. No, that was very difficult . . . almost impossible.

Igor measured with his eye the distance to the end of the main quay; once they were among the maze of the sheds and cranes, he might have a chance to get away. He slowed down his pace. The sentry didn't say a word and slowed down his. It seemed as if all sound in the world had died down just to let these two pairs of steps revel through the night; just these steps echoing in the emptiness—and nothing else.

When they approached the sheds the sentry suddenly asked: "Where did you want to get to?"

Igor was so astonished, that he almost stopped his walk, but the abrupt voice behind him pushed him with the muzzle of its carbine: "Don't stop, go on."

Igor continued his walk and said quietly: "To Pier No. 7."

For a moment there was nothing to be heard but the muffled sound of their steps as they passed underneath a huge crane. Then the sentry said again: "Then why the dickens did we find you near the flak ships at Number Twenty-One?"

Igor began to like the conversation. "I lost my way," he said between his teeth. Again there was silence. They came among the sheds.

"Now listen," he heard the sentry's voice, "if you suddenly began to run, it would be easier for you to get away here, wouldn't it? You could jump in one of these dark corners, and it would not be easy for me to catch you. The night is misty, and Pier Seven is the

fourth on your left from the main quay. Of course, I'd try to get you, maybe I would even shoot at you, but I guess I'd miss you in that bloody mist."

The voice of the sentry seemed further away. Maybe he slowed down his step, maybe Igor quickened his. In any case, he had heard enough. With a quick jump he dashed into a narrow corridor between two sheds, fell over a steel rope, scrambled up again, ran, ran and zig-zagged, until, panting, he noiselessly hid among the piles of sacks at the entrance of Pier Seven.

There was a shout, a curse somewhere in the rear, a shot echoed through the mist, footsteps were running along the concrete runway; a patter of voices; Igor lowered himself into the black, oily water, and got afloat. His eyes and ears strained to the utmost, he began to swim towards the dark shape with the red and green lights, which seemed stuck on to the dark wall of the jetty.

The water was dirty and cold, his face struck something which seemed at first a dead cat but proved to be a rotten melon. His limbs recovered but slowly from the shock caused by the sudden immersion in the icy water. He felt his shoes slowly filling with cold and soon he experienced their weight. Still, he could not discard them; they might be needed.

Breathing heavily, Igor swam without stopping until he reached the tug; the name, though painted over with grey colour, was plainly discernible on her stern in the reflection of the water. A rope was hanging from the deck, and Igor began to climb it after waiting for five minutes or so. The air was much colder than the water, but Igor did not feel it. He stepped quickly towards the skylight of the fo'c'sle and knocked gently at the pane. Almost instantly, as if he had touched a spring, a bearded head emerged from the door, a muffled voice said: "There he is."

Soon Igor found himself in the tiny cabin, lit by a sooty paraffin lamp, and the owner of the beard, who revealed himself as the skipper, poured an astonishing quantity of liquor down his throat. Igor's protests were in vain; the skipper had a hairy hand which held his head like a steel frame, while the bottle with the peach-brandy lifted itself at an ever obtuser angle. He had to drink whether he liked it or not and the skipper said: "That will do you good, you'd get pneumonia otherwise."

At last, after he had taken a prolonged gulp and seemed to pass out, the skipper let him loose, only to help himself and then to repeat the procedure with Igor.

Whatever the idea was, the strong liquor seemed to have a quick effect; Igor's hands warmed quickly, especially when massaged by a sailor in a dark red sweater. Another member of the crew was pulling off his shoes with a pull so strong that it almost dislocated Igor's joints.

Everyone seemed to act with the utmost carelessness, and Igor felt that he was getting drunk at a terrific speed.

He wanted to smile at the contrast which seemed to be so astonishingly quick, at the whirlwind of events which had happened in the last two hours, but his self-control gave out under the influence of the skipper's peach-brandy and he laughed out loud in an almost hysterical outburst. Once he started laughing, it took him quite a while to stop himself, especially as the ship's crew seemed to share his sudden good humour; they simply burst into laughter almost simultaneously, so that they almost forgot to give him warm clothing.

The bearded skipper was the first to realise this omission, and throwing open one of the built-in cupboards, handed Igor a complete sailor's outfit, including a striped pullover with a huge anchor on the chest, which threw Igor into another fit of laughter.

Again the ship's company joined in without knowing why, but at the end Igor succeeded in explaining to them that he felt as if he were at a fancy dress ball with the many disguises he had had in the last few days. His voice wasn't very firm; far too much brandy, he thought. Yet he told them of his encounter with the sentry after he had lost his way on the pier.

The skipper explained that they had been singing and playing the accordion the whole evening in order to ease his finding of the tug, but that they had to give it up after two hours. He wanted to explain many other things to Igor, but his peach-brandy unfortunately proved too strong; the victim's eyes had closed and a healthy snoring filled the room.

They wrapped him in a blanket like a huge doll, with limbs hanging lifeless as they stuck them under the blanket, and put him up in one of the bunks which were built, coffin-like, into the cabin.

When Igor opened his eyes, the tug was standing still, rocking gently in the swell. Rubbing his eyes, he went on deck, looking rather as if he had had a gay night—and feeling like it. They were at anchor at Port Sol, and the crew were busy washing the deck. He went back to the cabin, for it was raining a cold, sweeping autumn rain.

From outside one could hear the breakers crashing over the wall of the main jetty, near the yellow finger of the lighthouse, in a

sudden guffaw of the "sirocco." The sea was getting high, and as the glass was falling, the skipper thought the gale would increase. Igor borrowed a sou'wester from one of the sailors and went past the cursing crew to the wheelhouse.

The crew were cursing for all their worth because the skipper had ordered the deck to be washed at the precise moment when it had such a thorough lashing of rain. They didn't mince their words, and their grumbling was clearly audible within the wheel house, where the skipper sat drinking roasted acorn brew instead of his beloved coffee.

Igor got a huge mug, and immediately felt much better, only a slight headache reminding him of the skipper's magnificent peach-brandy. The skipper's mood was exactly the reverse of the previous evening. He seemed very business-like in his dark blue uniform with a short pipe stuck between his yellow teeth.

From over the jetty one could see the masts and funnels of Admiral Antonio's fleet resting quietly in their berths. Naval police, with raincoats over their blue and silver uniforms, could be seen between the showers inspecting barges and boats. Otherwise the harbour presented its usual busy appearance with tugs plying to and fro in the rain, and wet smoke dodging in between droplets of salt mist.

But in spite of that business-as-usual atmosphere, the skipper seemed worried: "Something is going wrong somewhere," he said. "I hope we will not get the police on board here. You don't look much like a sailor. Anybody could rumble that you don't belong here if they came on board. I've been on shore checking papers and they're much tougher than usual. Wonder why."

Igor did not wonder, he knew the reason. What, however, he could not know was that Admiral Antonio in his Renaissance palace felt just as uneasy as the skipper. He too had heard the news on the wireless, and even beforehand had had a hint about what was in the air. Simultaneously, his own position had grown more and more difficult as time went by.

Gone were the days when one could play tennis with Hermann Goering and exchange jokes; Marshal Goering had become Managing Director of the greatest continental industrial combine, called the Hermann Goering Werke, and his business was much more associated with that of Sebastian than Antonio's.

With this closer relationship to his rival came a cooling off towards himself. The Nazis were wooing Sebastian for a change, and the best

he could do was to mind his own business and keep the fires burning in his ships—just for manœuvres. That was a good hint to von Zinzel and the Admiral was sure that it had been forwarded to Berlin. Yes, then there were the gunnery practices of the fleet at the Torona Islands, just down the coast. That, too, was heard in Berlin.

When Admiral Doenitz came for an informal "friendly visit," Antonio took him round. He did not mind showing his fleet. How the Nazi's eyes rolled! Nice ships, in beautiful condition—just what they needed. Yes, that was all part of his game. What kind of game? God knows. Just a game; people play such games for the excitement they get out of it.

Admiral Doenitz went, and then the Nazis cut his oil, giving as the reason "transport difficulties." Yes, that was the first indication that our honeymoon is nearing its end, thought Antonio. This and that tug full of soldiers. He was worried, as it was the first time that soldiers of the German Wehrmacht had entered the territory of Port Sol.

Of course, the Gestapo had been here all the time, officially and unofficially. But the Wehrmacht—well, that looked much more serious. What had happened was this: on checking a barge, Admiral Antonio's harbour police suddenly found fifty fully-armed men in one of the holds, squeezed and squashed like sardines without room for oil. The men, in charge of a lieutenant, were pulled out and cross-questioned by Livel, Antonio's right-hand man, but nothing much could be got out of them.

He had himself listened and seen the prisoners from an adjoining room through a secret window which reflected rays falling from one side, while from the other one could see through it.

These men, who pretended to "have made a mistake," seemed highly intelligent shock-troops. Evidently picked men.

Now the German High Command was pretending that they were deserters and had asked for their return "for punishment." Also there were, of course, lots of excuses with a sour-sweet face. Now this, please, was no joke. Did the Germans want to "do him a Norway?" If so, Antonio was prepared to let them feel the sting. It would have been much easier if there had been more oil available, but even so one could make it hot; for instance, by cutting food supplies to Oliville, delaying the turning over of barges, fomenting unrest among dockers by severe oppressive measures and so on. Besides, it was necessary for reasons of self-preservation to check every boat again and again.

I wonder what intrigues Sebastian is brewing with von Zinzel,

thought Admiral Antonio, walking through a magnificent drawing-room with a real Titian on the wall, flanked by two beautiful fifteen-century tapestries. A rose-checked Mary Magdalene was looking into the skies with a benevolent Jesus peering down from between two clouds like a good uncle.

That's about the way von Zinzel is looking at me, thought Antonio. I wish I could do something about it. Idiot, that Sebastian, but a dangerous idiot; now they are repeating like parrots the old German slogan of "One people, one leader, one country," and our people are forgetting how well they have been living in Port Sol these last months. Yes, the fleet had been cleansed in time of all such elements. The Communists, Socialists, and similar rot were rooted out soon after the General Strike, but Silver Shirts were much more difficult to get rid of.

The Admiral found it a problem how to combat Fascism without resorting to anti-Fascism, which he could not do. The situation was becoming complicated. As long as the officers remained loyal not much could happen to him, unless the German situation was becoming desperate; that did not seem very likely yet.

On the other hand, the honeymoon was definitely at an end and Sebastian seemed in the ascendancy. The Silver Shirts were the danger, once the Boche was fully behind them.

A beautiful Titian this, thought the Admiral, look at the delicious tinge of the skin; these Italians of the late Renaissance were connoisseurs of female beauty.

Like Admiral Antonio, they liked Junoesque busts, and this in its turn made Antonio like them and other creations. Now suppose, the Admiral thought, instead of von Zinzel, there looked out of the clouds the head of good old Duke Orsino. What kind of expression would he have? Benevolent like yonder Jesus, or would he stand there like God the Father when he discovered Adam eating the forbidden fruit?

No, do not let us think of such things, it is far too risky. Von Zinzel is an old diplomat with an understanding of "condottieri," and one can always strike a bargain with him. The Admiral turned away from Titian and looked out of the window.

If he could have recognised him he would have seen Igor Duval aboard his tug, in conference with the skipper, who was just advising him on what could be done. The funny point was how similar the thoughts of the two men were, though on different levels.

Now the skipper was explaining the plan of campaign: "There's

the Portuguese—*Santa Maria* is her name—being loaded with Red Cross parcels. They must have lots of Boche prisoners, which feels quite agreeable,” said the captain.

“Now what I have heard made me rather fed up,” he continued. “You know, they want three thousand American dollars for letting you get on board as a stowaway. I tried to get that bloke of a stoker down, but he just wouldn’t hear of it. ‘It’s a great risk,’ he said, ‘and it’s not worth less than three thousand.’ Probably some of the Jews have been paying exorbitant prices; they have been spoiling the market,” he added with the justified anger of a grocer experiencing bitter competition.

Igor laughed, watching his annoyed expression. Still, the problem was a serious one; Igor’s money consisted of leva only, with some five-pound notes in English money. He thought hard about a way out, until finally, the skipper took the pipe out of his mouth; he looked exactly like the advertisement for tobacco stuck up on posters all over the country.

“Now listen,” he said, “this afternoon a mixed commission of German and Italian officers and officials will go on board the *Santa Maria* to sign all those papers. If you can’t be a paying stowaway, what about getting on board as a real one? The chance of getting on board from the sea to-night before sailing is nil. She is far too well guarded; she is, for them Jews have tried, during these last months, all sorts of means to get away, and the Germans are keen on catching the poor devils. Now I shouldn’t like you to get into trouble and so I think we’ll try to get you on board from the sea only in case everything else fails. I think you ought to get on the quay at three and see whether you couldn’t smuggle yourself on board somehow. If you can’t, you’ll return here and we’ll try it to-night from a boat.”

The skipper underlined his proposal by spitting on the floor and smothering the spittle with his huge boot. Igor deliberated about the proposal. It certainly wasn’t an attractive one, the chances of being caught being rather heavy. Still, he had known that his greatest difficulty would be to get out of the country and was prepared to take a heavy risk on this occasion. While he pondered over the proposal, the skipper watched him in silence, puffing clouds of nasty smelling smoke.

Dried potato leaves, thought Igor, I know the stuff. Still, the risk was worth while. Once on board the Portuguese, there would be a way out; after all, a neutral ship is considered to be neutral territory, and even if caught in the harbour, there was a chance that the captain

might not be willing to hand him over. The ever present Gestapo, of course, would apply pressure—and they well knew how to apply it. But still, risks must be taken this time, and so Igor decided to accept.

"Mark you," said the skipper, "I know how darned risky it is, but I'm glad you want to try, because the other way, though looking less difficult, is really much more dangerous."

"What about some clothing?" asked Igor, and the skipper nodded. He had thought of that.

"You must have a good suit," he said, "and that's the most difficult point. However, there is Karel, he has a blue suit which he's always wearing to dances. I think that if you could take his trousers and a good mackintosh, a pipe and a hat, you could pass as one of *them*—no offence meant."

Igor laughed aloud at this compliment, which caused the skipper lots of embarrassment. "You are an old conspirator," he said, and the old sailor blushed at this praise like a little girl. He got up and shook Igor's hand.

"Better stay here for a while," he said, "I'll see what I can do about it." Igor watched him going out and stopping at the boys, who ceased cursing as he left the wheelhouse. They seemed to be on very good terms in spite of their grumbling. The negotiations took less than five minutes. From their miming Igor saw that Karel was ready to sacrifice his Sunday dancing suit, and that the skipper was satisfied with the preparations.

Another change of disguise, thought Igor, and a strange hilarity fell over him, as he saw himself at the end of the perilous journey. This is the last time I change costume. Or is it really?

They had lunch in Igor's honour and it was the best they could scrape together. From somewhere a bottle of wine appeared, and as they drank Igor saw their gaze resting gravely on his face. He felt embarrassed; evidently this was a silent farewell. I must not betray them, he thought; so many hopes are resting on my escape, I must get away. I must succeed; it is so very important.

After lunch he dressed himself with the aid of the skipper's mirror; he looked formidable indeed. True, Karel's suit was cut for a rather broader and shorter figure, but Igor hoped that under the mackintosh those minor discrepancies would pass undetected.

Here we go, cross your fingers, he said to himself, as he climbed over the railing into the boat which was to take him to the main quay. "I say," shouted the skipper, running hurriedly out of his cabin, "here's something for you." And he handed him a slightly crumpled copy of a German newspaper. "I am sorry I couldn't get a Portuguese

one," he said with slight sorrow in his voice. "Try to get one, it will be a good thing."

As the boat pulled off, Igor could see the whole crew watching him as he approached the jetty. Still, they didn't stay for long; soon he saw them disperse on their daily duties so as not to attract attention. He turned towards Karel, who was at the oars: "I'm sorry to have taken your Sunday suit," he said. "It's a pity. I know what it means to you to have lent it to me."

The lad shook his head; he had a mouth with corners sloping downwards like two inverted commas. "There is not much dancing nowadays," he said. But two years ago, life was much better. Jitterbugging, for instance. Karel was a jitterbug fan. He had seen it in Glasgow. The girls in this country didn't fancy it yet, that is because they are not so civilised as the English girls. Karel did not like girls who went barelegged to a dance. That seemed to him rather indecent. I hope the rain will not stop, thought Igor, scanning the grey skies. As long as it rains as hard as it does now, everybody will be hurrying along.

As the boat touched, heaven seemed to grant his wish. The rain increased considerably, and the chains of drops seemed to fuse into strings woven to storm-pattern by a heavenly weaver. Karel gave a last look at his blue Sunday suit. He looked like a huge, square puppy, gazing at a lunch being carried past into the dining room where he has no right of entry. Igor suppressed a desire to pat his bushy flaxen hair, wet with rain as it was. Instead, he shook his firm, square hand, hard with work.

"Good luck," said the boy as Igor climbed on the quay. He waved, and Igor waved back. Then off he went, towards the main jetty, where the Portugese ship was lying. The rain seemed to come to a temporary standstill, only to whip down with double vigour a couple of instants later.

A German sentry, his uniform heavy with rain, hanging on his body like a sack, neared him as he hurried along the jetty. He had a round face, registered Igor, and huge water stains on his knees. He rubbed his hands: "Ihre Papiere," he said in German. Igor mimed his non-comprehension: "Non parlo Tedesco," he said in Italian. "Commissione dell Croce Rosso." That was about all he knew in the language of Dante and Michaelangelo, but it was definitely over the sentry's horizon.

The rather snappy tone in which these few words were spoken made the secretary's feet click, and he presented arms with the mech-

anical precision of a toy soldier. Igor lifted his fingers to the rim of his hat as he hurried on. He would not have believed that he would pass as easily as that. Thank God for the rain, he thought. Nobody is in the mood for long investigations.

As he turned the corner, he saw the Portugese ship. Huge Red Crosses were painted all over her deck and a veil of wet smoke hung over the bridge. She was getting up steam, which wasn't an easy job if one saw the rain forcing its way down her two funnels. A group of men stood at the gangway, looking rather cold and shabby. Igor drew near with the busy air of a man who has urgent business to do.

A soldier, with the olive brown face of a southern Italian, saluted, stepping in his way, but this time Igor put on his best German accent: "Danke, danke," he sneered at the man, brushing past, and before he could see his reaction he was already crossing the gangway. It had been child's play until now, and carried on the crest of his boldness he almost felt like joining the group of Italian officers who stood under the bridge, sheltering from the rain.

But just in time his intellect checked the flow of his imagination, and with the most businesslike air he could give himself he went past them to the bows of the ship. Everything had seemed so simple until now, too simple for his liking. There must be a snag, he thought, it can't be as simple as this. The bluff will be called, and then. . . . No good worrying in advance. A sailor in a dirty jacket approached, asking something in Portuguese, only to be frozen by Igor's magnificent Prussian.

Easy, friend, he said to himself, now let's have a look for a hide-out. The corner of the ship was empty, only the rain was beating a quick march on the tight waterproof of a rescue boat. For a moment Igor thought of hiding inside the boat, but then he changed his mind. No, that had been in too many a story, surely they would check such obvious places for stowaways.

He crossed the narrow corridor of the rain-lashed deck until he came to one of the skylights. He tried to lift the pane, and it opened. He looked inside and listened: there was complete silence and the hold did not seem deep. At the bottom were sacks of some kind. He wondered whether he should try to get in, and how; it seemed risky to venture into the unseen.

Suddenly he heard voices. Through the rain, a group of men were nearing the place where he stood. That decided it. He jumped and after a short fall landed on top of a pile of sacks. Mailbags, he thought, but didn't try to see whether he was right. He groped in

the dark, for the light coming from above was only a speck in the warm darkness of the hold.

Finally he found a corridor, and with hands outstretched like a blind man he tried to find his way. His hand rested on something round and wooden. He stopped. It was a barrel, the inside of which seemed greasy and mucky. It was empty. As the steps over his head seemed again to come nearer and somewhere a door opened with a click, Igor scrambled into the barrel and sat down in a crouched position.

The barrel seemed to be sticky and had a peculiar smell. It wasn't exactly what one would call a comfortable position, but Igor felt strangely relieved, with his chin touching his knees.

On the deck on top of him, steps were going to and fro, doors were the dark, for the light coming from above was only a speck in the being opened and closed, the cling clang of metal penetrated through the planks, and below him the structure of the boat creaked like the backbone of a chained monster. But it was warm there, and if it were not for his cramped position and the peculiar smell and sticky surface of the inside of the barrel, Igor would not have minded his shelter. The monotony of the noises and the warmth of the place were as strong as a sleeping draught, and very soon his eyes began to close.

Suddenly, with a jerk, he was awake and hit his head on the wall of the barrel, where his hair immediately stuck fast. He could distinctly hear his heart beating in the stillness which pervaded the hold, all other noises being suddenly drowned by his feeling of approaching danger.

He stopped in the middle of trying to loosen his hair from the barrel and listened: surely, this was the sound of approaching steps. A door was opened; now another one; the steps approached, and soon Igor saw the reflected light of a torch sweeping over the ceiling of the hold. Two men of the Naval Police and a German inspector were evidently checking the holds.

They must have stopped quite close to the barrel, for Igor heard their breath and it passed his understanding that they did not hear his heart beat.

He heard a thousand inward noises, as one always does on such occasions; he felt the whistling of the blood in the jugular; his stomach chose that moment for a barbaric rumbling.

The torchlight swept around, then went off, giving a last flash as if to say good-bye, as the men went away, unaware of Igor's presence.

That was the climax, and he knew that from now on he would be in comparative safety. He lay still, not even feeling his limbs begin-

ning to stuffen, his hair sticking to the greasy inside of the barrel. Minutes crept on, but this time he took care not to fall asleep.

At last, after an eternity of waiting, the ship took a deep breath and her engines began to murmur. From far away the machine-room telegraph spoke up, and the hull began to quiver with new life.

There wasn't much possibility of orientation down there, but soon Igor recognised from the lapping of the waves that the boat was going out, and after it had passed into the open sea, the bow seemed to engage in rhythmical, continuous swaying in all directions of the compass. It wasn't until then that his tension relaxed, and he fell asleep.

When he woke up, he was violently sick. He straightened himself, unsticking limb after limb from the inside of the barrel, feeling stiff and tired. Grey morning light was falling through the skylight. He vomited in the corner of the hold, which was full of the strangely shrieking noises of a ship fighting against heavy seas. His legs were tottering, and cold sweat stood on his forehead. His hair was stuck together as with plaster. He tried to wipe his cheeks, but his hands were full of the horrible, greasy stuff.

Just at this moment the door opened, and the slim shape of a youth appeared in the grey light falling from outside. As Igor turned towards him, the youth exclaimed in a high pitched voice "Madonna" and ran so quickly that he slipped and fell. As Igor approached, he scrambled to his feet and looked up at him with a fearful expression. He understood neither German, nor English, but the word "Capitano" was international enough; after much hesitation he led the way.

The captain was rather astounded to see his deckhand emerging with such a strange passenger. Still, he understood; sailors on neutral ships in wartime are apt to learn to understand. His German was broken and nasal, with a strong Latin accent.

"Well, my friend," he said to Igor, "I do not mind who you are and what you are, but I cannot take you with us to Portugal without handing you over to the authorities. . . . That will mean internment in Portugal for the whole war—unless. . . ."

"Unless?" said Igor breathlessly, brushing his marmalade-stuck hair with the fingers of his left hand. "Unless we land you at Gibraltar," said the Captain nonchalantly. Igor exclaimed; "Gibraltar? But that's just what I want!"

And a wave of happiness pervaded him like a warm flood.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAN FROM ILLYRIA

THE meeting of the Illyrian National Committee was nearing its end. "The last point, gentlemen," said Sir Andrew, "is the internment of Igor Duval. As you know already, I was notified three weeks ago about his arrival in Gibraltar and then in the internment camp; the British authorities are treating him so far as a suspect, which is understandable. This morning I was rung up and told that if the National Committee can vouch for this man, he will be released without further delay. Military Intelligence suggest that he is a genuine envoy from Illyria but they are not sure, as he had refused to let them know all the facts. He repeats that his messages are confidential and that he has full powers to convey them or withhold them. As the British authorities regard this as an internal Illyrian matter, I hereby put it before this meeting. Your Highness?"

The Duke coughed and slid back in his chair; his cold was still there and sometimes it was quite useful—one could cough and think matters over. Igor Duval . . . He remembered the man very well; what trouble there had been ten years ago when Sebastian stuck him into prison. It had been very useful for his popularity at home and abroad when he was able to defy the tin-pot dictator and have Igor released.

Since then the man had been an important personality in Illyrian life; after the occupation it had been rumoured for a time that he was killed, but evidently he was not. Troublemakers always get through unscathed: and troublemaker that man was undoubtedly.

The dilemma was clear: to let him cool down for some time would be useful here, especially in view of the tension between the Duke and Lord Easterfield; his Lordship plays himself too much as a protector and newspapermen stick together, he decided; besides, Duval is of an adventurous spirit and one cannot predict what he is going to do. To keep him interned, well, well. If he is an envoy, the British will let him out at a moment suitable for themselves and he will never forget. No, that will not do—better to shift the responsibility on to somebody else. He coughed again: "Well, gentlemen?"

There was silence for a few seconds, everybody thinking it over.

The case of Igor Duval was like a hot potato which one puts into one's mouth at a dinner in Buckingham Palace. It burns the palate—

but how difficult to spit it out. Sir Toby looked at Malvolio for guidance, but the little man's face was impenetrable. Most probably Malvolio did not favour Duval's early release.

As for Sir Andrew, he looked as innocent as an otter could with a freshly caught fish in its teeth: "It was said to me that he declared himself to be in possession of codes necessary for communication with Lehman and the so-called National Revolutionary Front constituted in Oliville. As he did not depose these, Your Highness will not know them without his release."

There, that should be a weighty addition in the scales. Sir Toby looked once again at Malvolio: "Is this man Duval . . . eh . . . reliable?"

There was another little silence, then Cardinal Révy broke it by saying that Igor Duval, being an envoy of Lehman, must be considered a military person.

That settled it—and wasn't it simple? Surely, if he was a military person, the problem could be safely handed over to our trusted friend, General Curio.

Not that General Curio was pleased with it; now the hot potato was in his mouth and there was nothing he could do. A guarantee, well, that meant responsibility for a little-known person. On the other hand, it might be good to get hold of a man who was possibly in General Lehman's confidence.

That decided him: "All right," he said, "I'll do it."

Now the matter was another man's responsibility, the Duke felt much more pugnacious: "Will Sir Andrew undertake the necessary steps?"

Sir Andrew promised to do so. Looking at Malvolio he saw what he thought were signs of the small man being displeased. Yes, Malvolio would like Igor to stay where he was. Without showing it, we could influence General Curio so that he would deliver the case virtually into one's hand. Soldiers were like children when it came to politics.

At this moment the Cardinal came to Sir Andrew's help: "Would it not be better to see the man first before a decision is taken? We are buying a 'cat in the bag,' so to speak, and General Curio would carry very heavy responsibility if anything went wrong." At this poor Curio showed signs of panic, and so Sir Andrew quickly chipped in to say that, of course, the British authorities regarded it all as a purely internal Illyrian matter.

Now General Curio began to perspire: "Surely the Intelligence Service have investigated the case?" he asked anxiously. Blast those

politicians, he thought, damn them three times over. Not only our people, but now also the English are putting all responsibility on my shoulders. I shouldn't have accepted—but now it is too late.

"The Ministry of Defence are under the impression that the man is genuine. He had documents in miniature which seem beyond falsification. Only, as I said he does not tell all he knows to the English. Maybe an interview with him will clear matters up."

And with this the meeting concluded.

But General Curio laboured heavily under his burden. As they left he joined Sir Andrew in his taxi, pretending that he went the same way.

Was it right? Should he do it? It was advice he needed. Sir Andrew was pleased to advise: Yes, decision was indeed difficult so far as it rested on one man only. But possible there were other people interested in that man Duval. If Curio knew of such men . . . He did not? Well, for instance, Lord Easterfield might. As the General looked at him with big eyes and begged for "moral support," Sir Andrew promised to do what he could.

As to the kind of support, he was non-committal. Of course, he knew how difficult it would be to decide and he felt deeply with the General. But he as a civilian could hardly be held responsible. Besides, his was an official position. . . . No, that would not do, that had worn a bit thin lately. Soon, he thought, the Committee will be a Government, a pity that I did not use my influence better while there was time for it. But if public opinion were to clamour for Duval, that would ease Curio's position. Besides, Labour would lap it up, and Sir Andrew still thought of Fabian with some hope. To contact Fabian would be too clumsy, naturally, but suppose one rang up Easterfield—well, that might do. Igor must know of this, of course. Might be useful, Sir Andrew mused.

"It all depends on how Lord Easterfield looks at it," he said to the General. "I will ring you about where you can meet Duval, and if you see him, tell him that I have done all I can to whip up public opinion for his release."

He left the General as bewildered as a child and stepped briskly into his office. Yes, this might fit into Easterfield's plans. He rang him up and met him for dinner in his office.

His Lordship was a terrifying worker and his office in the huge concrete building in Fleet Street was indeed the heart of his vast enterprise. Seven national papers are not an easy task to run, even for a man of six foot three, not to speak of dozens of satellite papers;

in the quickly shifting scene of war, it was necessary to pass decisions on policy as swiftly as possible. That was why Lord Easterfield rarely left his office before three in the morning.

The two men sat together in the rather shabby office in extremely comfortable easy chairs. Easterfield loved to have his office shabby and tales went round Fleet Street that he had it artificially prepared after every painting. He had huge feet which reposed on his desk, and the aromatic smoke of his cigar curled around an exquisite bronze lamp.

He was deeply thankful to Sir Andrew for the hint he had given him, he said. He had known Igor by reputation though he had not had the pleasure of meeting him.

The man is a hero, and our people intern him. That looks like the Home Secretary—or was it the F.O.? As far as the Mediterranean problem is concerned, we are like a lot of children. Clumsy. Yes. The average Englishman still thinks that Bucharest was the capital of Yugoslavia and Illyrians and Albanians the same nation. But a man from Illyria—a fighter like Igor Duval!—his Lordship grew enthusiastic and there must have been some reason. Sir Andrew did not mind, he liked enthusiasm.

The editors of the seven national papers dropped in about ten, when the first edition had gone to press. The huge building reverberated with the steady hum of the presses which, down in the depth of the cellar, devoured tons of paper to transform it into channels of public opinion. With them, Lord Easterfield developed a plan of action which Sir Andrew did not hear to the end. He had an appointment in his club at half-past ten, and so he got only the rough outline of his Lordship's strategical lay-out: There were the seven newspapers, ranging from pink to blue. Now into this peaceful tangle of opinions the apple of discord would be thrown, the apple Igor Duval.

To release or not to release, that was the question. The *Daily Echo* would be for not releasing him, while the *Courier* would plump all for it. The *Megaphone* would cherish a rather impartial opinion, which the Editor of 8 A.M. would consider soft and cowardly.

Prepared like this, the matter would be excellent news, stimulating the war effort and public opinion on Balkan matters, without committing Lord Easterfield to any specific course of action as long as the tactics of the various papers remained well co-ordinated. His Lordship would see well to that.

Besides, this would greatly please Duval when released and would ease contacts. Lord Easterfield was a realist and he knew that if Igor was what he pretended, he was a person of considerable importance

and might prove a useful weapon against Sir James when and if a conflict should arise.

Out of the well-staged controversy of the seven papers there was bound to arise a terrific build-up in which sooner or later the whole National Committee would have to join. A well-built house of cards, which yet could be smashed with a single blow by his Lordship if this should prove necessary.

It was well past two in the morning when the editorial conference finished. The Editors of the seven national papers were used to the speedy decisions of their indefatigable boss; Lord Easterfield was famous for his never-ending stream of talk, which could have, as a French editor once said, talked a calf out of a virgin cow.

For Lord Easterfield the whole draw was nothing but a carefully thought out move on the chess-board of his plans; yet the practical results were staggering. When seven great papers start a campaign about a man's release, it is difficult to keep him in for long. Two days later the country was swamped with photographs of Igor and excerpts of the old despatches which had made him famous.

Igor looked out of his house in the internment camp. It was a pretty little villa, on the crest of the hill overlooking the bay between the two tips of land. The sea was stormy and breakers were crashing over the walls of the quay. From below came the sound of the piano. Mr. Einzig, a German, was playing the Waldstein Sonata by Beethoven. His neighbour to the left side, a certain Mr. Lazslo, was shaving himself and whistled the air.

Lazslo had been a dentist in Budapest and London; since Britain and Hungary were at war he had been interned. He hated the Czechs. For him, the Czechs were the root of all evil; the war had started because of them and Benes was the archdevil of Europe. Igor listened to him without arguing back; his head was full of other thoughts. For that was how his travels ended: internment among these men here, innocent and fifth columnists, Nazis and Jews, Finns, Hungarians and Bulgarians.

The life in the camp was peaceful enough; there was no torture, no compulsion, kind treatment. Still, everybody hated it. Igor hated it—and not only because of the mission which remained unfulfilled. Last night, when they sat together in the living-room, Mr. Einzig, who had passed three years in a German concentration camp because of his Communist activities, explained that for him all the horrors of that German camp were better than this comfortable internment:

"We knew why we were there," he said, "there was pride and solidarity in each of us. While here . . . there is nothing between us, nothing to join us together. That is why we hate each other so much." And they did hate each other. Einzig hated Lazslo for his whistling; he in his turn hated Einzig's piano recitals. Both of them hated Mr. Mueller, who in his turn could not stand the sight of Pyrin, the Bulgarian.

Igor tried to stay aloof. He knew that sooner or later he would be released, that his stay in this camp was merely temporary; yet he could not help himself, within a week he hated just as the others did. The poisoned atmosphere of his environment was as contagious as a disease.

Then there were the English sentries, the majority kind and gentle like nurses in a lunatic asylum. Some were, of course, rude, but the majority of them behaved to the internees like grown-ups to naughty children. It was exasperating. Igor had tried to explain to the commanding officer of the camp that he had an important mission. That he had tried for weeks to get out of his country. That he had risked his life and that all this seemed now in vain.

The C.O. listened kindly, nodding his head. It was clear that he was used to such talk. He explained, slowly and patiently, that he was powerless. That the Home Office knew about Igor being here and that there was nothing for it but to wait. No communication, he regretted, could be sent by Igor to the outside world. How superior he was, with his kind and polite manner! Igor bit his fingers.

What do you know about our life in the mountains, about the bitter nights of cold and hunger, about the bodies dangling from gallows in busy squares, about villages burned and men and women transported to Germany on fortification work, about fighters without weapons and ammunition? Igor bit his fingers and swallowed his anger. There was nothing else he could do. As the days passed by, his anger grew. Time. Time. What happened in London? Little he knew of the tremendous developments, of the fame which was to engulf him within the next few days. In London he was a hero, but here he was still number 85344/BHII.

Mr. Einzig had finished his Waldstein Sonata and had started pre-luding on the piano. That drove Mr. Lazslo crazy. With his face half shaved he ran to the staircase, safety-razor in hand, and shouted: "Shut up!" like an angry bull.

Mr. Mueller sat at the fireplace and whistled a Nazi marching song. He liked their marching songs, though he swore he was not a Nazi. Of course, in an internment camp everybody is crackers pretty soon

so it was not clear whether or not Mr. Mueller was whistling his songs out of mere protest against everybody else.

It was then that a sentry called Igor Duval to the commanding officer. It was late afternoon and the occupants of the various houses sat at their windows gazing at the empty street, wondering whether something was going to happen; there was not much news in this place; newspapers and wireless were forbidden, and the only thing one could do in the long evenings was to broadcast rumours which spread like wildfire in this land of false peacefulness.

When the sentry came, Mr. Einzig stopped in the middle of a prelude and went to have a look. Even Mr. Lazslo, just in the middle of his wash, appeared at the window of his attic and propped himself up there, his features covered with bits of soap and droplets of water; Mr. Mueller, at the best of "We are flying against England," stopped abruptly and peered at Igor as he left the front gate.

A gauntlet of silent faces awaited them when they began to walk down the steep street towards the bay. Igor's heart bumped high in his throat: at last he was going to be free, at last he would be able to partake in the fight. The sea gushed against the quay; that and his heart were the only noises he perceived.

When they entered the C.O.'s office, Major Desmond looked up with a gracious smile such as he seldom gave to his "patients." He even offered Igor a cigarette: "There is good news for you, Monsieur," he said in his guttural French. "There is a telegram for your immediate despatch to London. If you hurry up, you might catch the night-ferry."

Igor's excitement suddenly abated. Now let us keep a cool head, he thought, things will not be very easy yet. Major Desmond continued; he hoped that Igor's memories would not be too unpleasant; there was a war on, and one could not always be as hospitable as one would like. "We are not less interned here than those behind the barbed wire," concluded the Major.

Igor smiled: "If you are behind the barbed wire, you somehow cannot find enough objectivity for your gaolers," he replied, sucking his cigarette. An English cigarette; it tasted good. He liked it. Yes, the man was very English; one could not expect him to understand these bitter, quarrelling, garrulous men he had to guard. He probably longed for the country house in Sussex and his circle of friends. Now he handed to Igor a newspaper: "Here, that's about you."

Pity my English is so bad, thought Igor, looking at the page

adorned with an old photograph of his. Look at the headline: *Guerilla-General's Envoy Interned*. That's not bad. Astonishing prominence one has reached without knowing it: Famous journalist . . . indomitable fighter for freedom . . . friend or foe?

Lord Easterfield's *Courier* was certainly well on the line, attacking the authorities for Igor's internment; Igor was bewildered and happy to have such powerful friends. He only wondered who they were and what were their motives.

There, Major Desmond looked at him with an inscrutable face: "Well, you are famous now. I hope that you will forgive us our momentary discourtesy. One cannot be as hospitable in wartime as one would like."

Igor smiled at this human touch. Somehow everything seemed much easier now. When they got up, the two men shook hands. When Igor walked back up the silent street, his heart was heavy at the sight of these hopeless eyes tried to read his face.

"So you are going?" asked Mr. Einzig when Igor started putting his few possessions into his small bag. "Do not forget to write me," he went on. "There is nobody to write me except the authorities. I don't know a soul here and if it were not for the piano I would go crazy like Mueller over there or that Bulgarian who talks to himself because nobody understands him. I don't know whether you can do it, but if you could find some way to get me out of there . . . I'd be grateful to my dying day."

Poor Mr. Einzig, he's been locked up since spring, 1940, thought Igor. If he was Jewish it would be easier to prove that was anti-Nazi. But his too nordic looks—well, we cannot promise anything. Herr Einzig, we are not yet free ourselves, he thought. But we will do our best.

Now hurry not to miss the night-ferry, good-bye Einzig. Good-bye Lazslo, there we go, more faces than ever look at Igor walking down the silent street, they don't move behind the plates of cold transparent glass; what do we know about their fates, what do we care. This is an internment camp and we are going to be released. Or, at least, we hope we are going to be. There is a dusk, the soft dusk of these latitudes, with colours as fine as those of old Copenhagen porcelain. The wind smells salty and gulls are screaming overhead. The sea; yes, that is eternity, washing the shores of these islands as well as those of Illyria. To Igor it seemed as if the breakers beating against the quay were synchronising with the rhythm of his steps.

Far away in a quiet London club two men sat over their cups of

black coffee after a simple dinner. Old friends they were, poker-faced both of them, playing the old game possibly because they did not know another; Sir James Bowhill and Malvolio.

It was very quiet in the lounge. Two bishops, calling each other by the names of their respective dioceses, were talking to each other with voices ringing through the lofty room like churchbells, and the Minister of Transport sat sprawled in an easy chair with the newspaper grasped firmly in his sleeping hand. A clock ticked on the wall but time seemed to stand still.

Sir James felt at ease; with an adroit gesture he adjusted his false teeth, listening to Malvolio's quiet dry voice. Of course, this Illyrian game was pretty small in the huge pattern of imperial politics, but in view of Easterfield's intentions it could soon embrace the whole of the Balkans and possibly have implications deep in the Middle East.

Sir James knew all about his Lordship. Also about the newly formed U.S. Mediterranean Society with Mr. Woodrow C. Macconochie Junior as its secretary. It was so simple, so childishly simple. There they sat, the two old men in a quiet corner of a huge room, like two spiders watching from their finely woven nets the world of flies dancing in the sun.

Some of the flies were pretty big of course, Lord Easterfield was no mean example of this. But even if at present they are not caught, sooner or later they will be—if only the nets to catch them are fine and cunning enough. It's like those Russian Easter eggs: you open one, and there's another inside. You open that, only to discover a smaller one. And so you can go on in never-ending search; so it is with human plans.

There: His Lordship plays up this man Igor Duval. Coming from where he comes he cannot be but a revolutionary; it would be a thousand times better to send him to Canada, out of the way. But no, His Lordship wants to use him to squeeze poor little Duke Orsino. Since he has been Chairman of the Illyrian National Committee His Highness is inclined to ride the high horse. It is always good to show him that he is not irreplaceable; and Igor Duval might be just the man to do it.

Now we see into his Lordship's designs; true, at first Malvolio tried to oppose it. But why should he continue? Give the man enough rope and he will hang himself. Easterfield will be careful not to put too much on this rather doubtful horse. But could he not be made to? Suppose in such a race the horse lost, his Lordship might be left in the lurch. It is clear that a man like Duval will be no mean asset to the left and all pro-Soviet designs. By good coaching he might

make himself so disagreeable to Easterfield as to compromise him right and left.

His Lordship will have to drop him, but that must be prevented until the time is ripe.

At the moment, mused Sir James, what we want is consolidation of the political situation, and if Easterfield wants to run Orsino for a federation of Mediterranean States—how did they call it in the *Daily Echo*? Yes, Danubia—so much the better. And if Duval can be used to keep His Highness sitting tight for the time being, all right, let him out for the moment. He will be a good bogey for His Highness; otherwise His Highness might think that he is absolutely necessary to run the Illyrian show.

The most important thing, thought Sir James, is the balance of power in the Mediterranean. The Admiralty are worried about the situation, and it would be good if Admiral Antonio climbed down from his fence and showed his colours. As far as General Sebastian. . . .

Here Malvolio refused to be drawn. His relation to Sebastian was unclear, and even Sir James did not know what had happened. It seemed to all the world that the two men were deadly enemies and Sir James was inclined to believe it. Of course, finance was an intricate game and it was necessary to take even one's own judgment with a grain of salt.

Antonio and Sebastian were Malvolio's best cards as far as Sir James was concerned. Economically he was the weaker of the two—as long as Europe was in the Nazi grip, for his world was much more continental than overseas. However, for high inter-Allied policy and especially for the post-war designs, one had to take one's hat off to Malvolio. Sir James lit his pipe, watching the little man opposite, and did this in the spirit. Yes, murmured Malvolio to himself. Give him enough rope and he will hang himself.

Sir James had nothing to say to this. These were things entirely in Malvolio's sphere, where the strange partnership of the two men had its limits.

He smoked quietly, watching the glowing coke in the fireplace. The other man's seemingly lidless eyes were closed. He seemed asleep in his deep chair, and nothing was heard in the room but the ringing voices of the two bishops, who were discussing the effect of war on morals of youth, an endless subject.

Igor's journey from internment to London passed without much ado. Not that he was permitted to travel alone; a plain clothes policeman

of some sort was his company, but the man was discreet, and Igor did not see much of him.

When the night-ferry bit into the rough, ink-black seas, Igor curled himself into the narrow bed in his cabin and fell asleep. In the morning, when he was awakened with an early cup of tea, the boat was well in port, rocking gently. He packed his bits and pieces and had his breakfast. Afterwards he went on shore.

The long-legged figure of the plain clothes policeman walked in front of him, calling a taxi, paying fares, waving a ticket when they arrived at the station. They had a first-class compartment all for themselves, and Igor observed the man. He behaved with perfect courtesy, evidently not knowing whether the man in his charge was a crook or a prince in disguise—or both. He was discreet again, hiding himself behind the screen of various dailies which he held before his face.

Igor tried to start a conversation, but his English was not good enough or the man pretended not to understand it; after a few phrases they relapsed into a silence which was not broken until they reached the capital. A spacious car awaited them at the station. While the long-legged escort slipped beside the driver, Igor sprawled into the seat behind and lit a cigarette—one of the many amenities provided by the detective. Yes, he felt quite comfortable and now he only wondered what was going to happen.

Outside the windows, London slipped past. London. Igor sighed; it was not so long ago that he had seen the streets of Oliville. One certainly does get about in this war, he thought.

They stopped in front of a huge building in Whitehall and a man in uniform opened the door. Igor brushed past. There, suddenly, was his escort. Up they went and through a huge corridor where their steps rang on the tiles. A door opened and Igor stepped in.

There were three persons present: the short figure of General Curio in Illyrian uniform, an English officer of evidently high rank, and a civilian with gold-rimmed spectacles.

General Curio recognised Igor instantly and was torn between conflicting emotions. If it had not been for the two fish-faced Englishmen he would have taken Igor round the neck and kissed him on both cheeks as one does, by the way without much significance, in Illyria. But as it was, the whole meeting went with the practical formality of the English race.

The civilian, who spoke French fluently, produced photographic enlargements of Igor's documents and handed them, together with the originals, to General Curio.

Looks like him, thought Igor, he was always rather a nonentity. Needs two hours to recognise 'Papa' Lehman's signature; as if the Secret Service had not already checked it ten times.

The two Englishmen nodded and exchanged a few phrases in their mumbling voices, to which Curio responded by a few assertive remarks. The civilian took his glasses off, cleaned them, clicked the container before tucking it into his pocket, and bowed stiffly. The military personage smiled, feeling perfectly at ease.

"Monsieur," he said, "I have the pleasure of informing you that you are free. Only as a matter of form you will have to register with the police. A sergeant will call on you to-morrow and will take you to Scotland Yard." He smiled with a great deal of charm and shook Igor's hand.

Igor was asked many questions when he arrived in his hotel. When he entered, he was almost blinded by the glare of flashlights; a party of Lord Easterfield's newsboys were there, together with several more reporters. Igor had not much to say. He was averse from so much publicity and could not understand the reason for it. He had been a newspaper man long enough to know that such things do not happen for nothing. He thought of the headlines and the photograph he had seen at the C.O.'s desk in the internment camp. Powerful friends he had got: I wonder what the price will be, he thought when he retired to bed.

The reception at the Duke's took place in the quiet house in St. James's Square. Martin, the faithful butler, had by now not only one, but half a dozen new coats, and the time when he had been forced to keep the only good one for special occasions was definitely over.

The first thought Igor had, when he faced His Highness, was that the Duke had not changed much; yet later on, when they sat in the winter-garden, he saw the thinning grey head, the wrinkles in the soft chin and around the eyes.

The strangest thing was the uneasiness which everybody seemed to feel at his presence. They asked many questions but they did not like to answer questions themselves. Igor had come here with a straightforward, simple message. His purpose was to help as much as possible the men who had sent him. During the meeting over there he had not spoken; now was the time to raise his voice.

Igor was a good speaker, and what he said seemed to make a great impression on the Duke. For a moment there was contact between the two men, and Igor thought that here, at last, he would be able to talk business. But that was a mere flicker, for exactly at that

instant Duchess Viola came into the room. Her dominating figure, dressed in black as usual, seemed to obscure the light.

Outside, a cloud had just passed across the sun. The winter-garden turney grey and conversation turned to phrases. Questions again, which Igor answered not without demur. Was it true that the Germans took youth away from church? Was it true that there was sexual promiscuity to a large extent? Igor felt an icy cold touch; this was England and he had come from the south; but possibly this was also due to the nature of the Duchess's questions.

So this was what she worried about most—Churches. Massacres of monks. Expropriation of nuns. Igor thought of the thin priest who gave him his blessing before he left Oliville: there, that was Christianity for him.

He told the episode, turning its edge against General Sebastian. The General had, since the occupation, concluded a Concordat with the Papal See and, so far as he knew there had been no steps taken by the Nuncio or the Pope himself against the outrages of the Silver Shirts.

The Duchess listened, her forehead covered with angry wrinkles: "Whatever you say, Mr. Duval, the General is at least a Christian gentleman, even if he is an enemy now. While . . ."

"While?" repeated Igor, looking at her sharply, "I am listening, Your Highness."

But the Duchess let the challenge pass unnoticed, while her son, evidently ill at ease, sat squeezed in the corner of the couch. His lips were tilted when he tried to jest: "Age does not touch you, Duval. Still the same. It is more than ten years ago since I pulled you out of the gaol because you were such a firebrand then. Evidently you have not changed." Igor smiled: "Nor do I want to, Your Highness. You know why I am here. General Lehman has sent me, the National Liberation Front has sent me. I know that Your Highnesses feel strongly about the uneven fight in our country and I am sure that you will do the utmost in your power."

The Duke's mouth lifted in a sad smile: "You can be sure of that," he said, "at the next meeting of the National Committee we are going to discuss your position here and we will do our best to enable you to get the help you desire to give. Only," the Duke added, "it will not be an easy task."

"Yes," added the Duchess, "it will not be an easy task, we all know that." She got up, saying this, and Igor understood that the audience was at an end.

"There is no difficulty which is not surmountable," he said, bowing

deeply to the old woman. "I am sure that Your Highness knows the proverb about the faith which transports mountains." With that he went.

The old woman waited until she heard him leaving the room. "Impudence," she muttered to herself, drawing the edges of her collar over the haggard wrinkled neck like a tortoise, "the impudence of that man coming over from Illyria to tell us off. Sebastian ought to have locked him up and let him rot in prison. That's the place where individuals like him belong. And you, Rudolph, are not a man if you let him talk to your mother like that. You are not a man," she repeated.

The Duke got up; he was suddenly like a small boy; there were two lines around his mouth as if he wanted to cry and his eyes seemed more sunken than usual: "You are right, Mama," he said slowly, "I am not a man." Suddenly his voice jumped to a high pitch and his cheeks flushed with an onrush of anger: "And now, get out, Mama," he shouted almost hysterically. "I am the head of this House. Get out, I tell you."

The old Duchess was so startled at this sudden outburst of emotion that for the moment she did not know what to do. Deciding on a course of action, she left the room crying. The Duke looked after her, breathing heavily. He was tired, very tired. His digestion! That excitement was very bad for digestion. Dr. Whitbread had said, do not get excited, Your Highness, he said, your nervous system is very delicate. There. And Mama does excite me again and again. He rang the bell: "Martin, my pills."

The old man slipped out: "Yes, Your Highness." The Duke pulled the white telephone to the couch, lay down and dialled a number: "Could I speak to Miss Mills? . . . Tell her that Mr. Monti is calling her . . . Thank you." While waiting, the Duke took his pills. He felt much relieved: "Hallo, darling, is that you? Monti here. What was last night's performance like? Did you spot darling Monti in the box? Did . . . you . . ." Yes. What does she mind about that all, as long as one pays. Poor me.

There was commotion in "Unity House." Old Nemir, who had lately changed his private lodgings for a bedroom in the refugee-hostel, sat in Fabian's office, tooth-pick in hand, lecturing him on his wrong tactics. He liked tooth-picks, and as there were none to be got in England, he used to provide himself with the necessary stock by means of his pocket knife and firewood.

The small room was crowded. In the corner one could see the pale

head of Dr. Vitel, the notorious refugee who refused to carry buckets. The evening sun was falling at a low angle through the curtains; it had been a crisp winter day and its soft rays provided the pale face of Vitel with a sort of halo.

Poor man, he had not slept much lately; his wife had her usual depression and cried every night until daybreak. There had been several complaints from the neighbouring rooms about her whimpering, and Dr. Vitel was frightened lest he should be evicted; they said that he used to cover her with cushions in order to muffle her crying for the baby she had thrown into the sea many months ago; but no, her shrieks seemed to have a high penetrating power, and in the stillness of the night one could hear them even in the basement boiler room.

The men and women in the refugee hostel were bitter, and no wonder, for each of them had his little bundle of fate to bear through the days. Old Nemir used to be called "Father of the working class" in the good old days of Oliville. Mr. Tibo used to be a professor at the University, until the Silver Shirts wrecked his laboratory and set fire to his house. Isaac Lewit had been one of the richest merchants in the country . . . and so on. A cavalcade of pitifulness.

The trouble is, thought Nemir, that if you see one beggar in the street, you feel pity. If you see two, maybe you still feel pity. If three, you are slightly repelled. But a houseful of beggars—well, quantity changes into quality, as good old Engels says. A houseful of beggars, that was how they felt in "Unity House." Down and outs, that was what they were, only they would not admit it.

The room smelt of disinfectant and moth powder and cold smoke. It was full of voices, bitter remarks, complaints. Fabian sat behind his desk and listened to old Nemir's harangue: There comes that Duval from Illyria and instead of us, contacts the phoney crowd around that so-called National Committee. That comes of taking a wrong political line. That is the outcome of listening to that skunk Malvolio.

It was a mistake to break and burn all bridges. Opposition was a fruitless game and Labour should not play it. Why did Fabian wreck the National Committee when it was first formed? Why did he not see through the game of Malvolio, who had used him only to delay its formation? Why continue to attack the Committee through the channels of the left-wing press? Surely it would be better to come to an agreement. Surely there was much more to be gained by being in than by staying out.

Fabian shook his mane when the voice of the old man rose to its

highest pitch. Oh, the endless bickering of all these politicians without followers; he felt sick of it. There they are, talking, talking. Congresses every three months, conspiracies, cliques. Expulsions from political parties consisting of a handful of men. A secret service, opening each other's letters, spying into private movements, associations, friendships. These wheels of a once mighty machine were running wild. If only I could give them something to do, thought Fabian. The game of Labour is not less intricate than that of Finance.

"We have our price," he shouted. "Brother Nemir was at first in the left-wing opposition, now he is on the right-wing line. It would be of no use to join the Committee on their terms. Opposition is the only course; we can agree to step in only on certain conditions. And as far as Igor Duval is concerned, let him find out for himself. He can do nothing without organised Labour behind him."

Fabian was prepared to resign, unless his leadership was accepted. He would not approach Duval; let Duval approach him first. "Who is Duval? A so-called 'emissary' of General Lehman, God knows what his credentials are. Well, brothers, do you accept my resignation?"

Of course not. One more victory in "Unity House," thought Fabian. But the next time I'll do it.

It looks as if I'm pretty much by myself, thought Igor Duval, walking in Hyde Park. The frost had fried the grass into an ice-cake and two lonely ducks were skating on the thin ice of the Serpentine. On a bench sat a couple of lovers not minding the cold, which made their breath rise like small clouds of steam. She huddled her head against his uniform and her hands were tucked beneath the heavy greatcoat. Except for hungry sparrows the great park was quiet and peaceful, barrage balloons drifting in the air frozen into crystal clearness. Igor was walking southwards towards Kensington to the meeting of the National Committee, of which he had become a member.

We have now been in London quite a time; soon it will be spring, thought Igor, and what are the results? None for the moment. In the onrush of the first days one thought that one would be able to help quickly; but things move slowly, exasperatingly slowly.

There were two courses which one could take: either collaborate with the National Committee or with Fabian. What was my task, when I was despatched to London? Arms. Arms for General Lehman. Fabian could not let me have those, the Committee maybe could. Hence this decision. A difficult decision. Here I am, alone among these wolves. For wolves they are, for sure.

At the last meeting, for instance, the National Committee moved a motion, sponsored by Sir Andrew Aguecheek, that a country house near Sevenoaks called "The Grange" be bought at the expense of the National Committee and granted as a gift to the Ducal Family. Furthermore, there was a heated discussion about grants for various members of the provisional Committee for the nuclei of administration to be set up. That is their main worry.

Sir Toby Belch has bought a beautiful Bentley secondhand and is running it on diplomatic petrol on the account of the Anglo-Illyrian Fellowship. He and Sir Andrew seem to be rivals at the moment for the favour of the Duke and Malvolio. The Anglo-Illyrian Fellowship is flourishing as the meeting ground of London society.

It was there that Igor had been introduced into these circles; at a Musical Tea, patronised by Princess Cecilia.

Lady Easterfield was there, a very refined society woman. A string quartet was fiddling discreetly one of Beethoven's last quartets, while in the background one could hear hushed whispers about fashions and gossip about family affairs.

Beethoven's quartets are pieces of music which are on the borderline of this medium; they are more than music. Like a film projected on the whole wall of the cinema, with only that part visible which is on the usual screen. If only one could have eyes sharp enough to discern the rest of the picture!

There was clinking of tea cups, and Lady Mayflower dropped a spoon which fell with a piercing sound just in the middle of the *Andante*. Lady Mayflower blushed crimson under the angry gaze of Malvolio, who turned round like a somnambulist suddenly woken out of his trance on the edge of the roof. If only one could concentrate on Beethoven! But one could not.

At last the music was over. Princess Cecilia was playing the hostess: May I introduce our friend just arrived from our poor country?—Most interesting. I am delighted. Would you mind telling us something about the horrors of the Nazi occupation? You see, we have seen it in the films, but . . . Now this is interesting, indeed. Just a moment, you will excuse me, this is our friend Igor Duval, just arrived from our fatherland. Delighted to meet you. You must have had a hell of a lot of adventures, Mr. . . . Duval's the name. Could you tell us some interesting story? Excuse me, just for a moment, this is Mr. Duval, a celebrated news editor, just arrived from our poor fatherland . . . Oh, how thrilling! Surely you have much to tell, would you . . . Never mind. Shove me round like an animal

in the zoo. It's a long time since I was introduced into society.

How bored the Duke looks. And there, Captain Valentine discussing important matters with Sir Andrew. How that tail-coat sits on our dapper ambassador! He looks like an otter just creeping out of the water. Here are Lord and Lady Easterfield. Sorry that my English is so bad, he certainly looks pretty interesting, this human dynamo, six feet three high, he fills the room all by himself, moving his restless limbs.

"May I introduce," says His Lordship, "Mr. Woodrow C. Macconochie Junior of the U.S. Mediterranean Society. You surely will have heard about him, if not in his official capacity, then at least as a fellow newsman from the United States."

"Delighted to meet you," says the American, shaking Igor violently by the hand. He is a tall, well-shaven man with white hair and a smooth, ever smiling face. The jaws are powerful and the lips are curled by an everlasting grin. He almost radiates optimism and there is something boyish, adolescent about this mighty man.

They have a drink. Mr. Macconochie consumes immense quantities of pink gin. He laughs heartily, rather too heartily for Igor's liking. Whether his teeth are his own or not, they look pretty much like those of a horse. The stream of his talk is overwhelming, but so also is his knowledge of pre-war Illyria; especially his information about the trade situation, which is excellent.

Igor is soon tired of these commercial reminiscences. His English is not good enough to follow the American's nasal accent. Besides, one has come to Britain to discuss arms for the guerillas, not the state of the Illyrian industry before and after the war. Macconochie . . . ah, yes, he's the owner of the mighty Macconochie chain in the States. And so now we are going to hear how the Americans are going to civilise us when they have won the war. Thank you, Mr. Macconochie, we have been waiting for you; only, at the moment, we are more interested in tommy-guns and hand-grenades than in cars, refrigerators and blue-prints of the future.

His Lordship feels a storm coming and quickly intercepts the conversation, which is drifting in a dangerous direction. "Tell me," he chips in, "is the Duke popular in the country?"

Just like that, a simple question. But we are on guard: Certainly he is, the whole country hopes that he is going to press for political recognition of the National Liberation Front and military help.

"Military help," says the American, swallowing his r's, "that's a problem for the Army to deal with, not us."

"If you will excuse me," retorts Igor, "the soldiers do what the

politicians get them to do, not vice versa." How Sir Andrew looks! So does Sir Toby. And there, the young son of Lord Easterfield chatters with the little Princess Edith under the gaze of Duchess Viola, discreetly hidden behind the chandelier.

"But His Highness plays an important part in the designs of our political warfare," says Lord Easterfield. "The American State Department. . . ."

Just a minute, thinks Igor, what does all this mean? But there, His Lordship continues: "I do not know whether you know of His Highness's contemplated marriage with the Duchess of Sydenham. Do you think that the Illyrian people would receive favourably the news of a marriage of their sovereign to a princess of the English Royal Family?"

The retort is simple: "Why does not your Lordship press the Ministry of Defence—or whose ever job it is—for the establishment of direct contact with Illyria? I do not pretend to read the mind of General Lehman from here but from what I know of him he will speak directly and clearly. I believe that he would be much more interested in weapons at present."

"If you will excuse me," says the American, moving his huge jaws in one of his special boyish smiles, "I would like to have a word with Sir Andrew." He is gone like the cat in Alice in Wonderland, only the smile somehow remaining in the air, and we are left alone with His Lordship.

Now let us speak French, because our English is miserable, while his Lordship's French is fluent and precise; His Lordship was always greatly impressed by Igor's excellent craftsmanship, his paper was well made, though his Lordship did not always agree with the opinions expressed in it; however, the secret of the British Press is that very often the owner does not necessarily agree with opinions voiced in his own paper. There is a certain tolerance between owner and editor. Yes. That is why his Lordship proposes to establish a similar paper to Igor's in this country. It could be printed in two versions, one designed for Illyrians in their own tongue, one for the British interested in Mediterranean affairs.

An independent paper, says his Lordship, putting accent on the word independent.

With yourself as Editor-in-chief. I should be delighted to help.

His Lordship's hairy hands are on the table, invisible cards are played slowly and carefully; the rest is politeness, an invitation to lunch in the Savoy to discuss the proposals; the Savoy is near Fleet Street, you understand, we cannot leave our office for long. Goodness

gracious, a lady is singing two modern French songs, we must be silent.

Sir Toby's Anglo-Illyrian Fellowship certainly fulfils the task well. A whirl of society dissolves in the best of goodwill, there goes our Kingmaker with a polite bow of his highly placed head, a small man with watery eyes nods and dissolves, Sir Toby's red nose gleams like a bulb at the door. I hope that you had a pleasant evening. Would you like a little chat with me? Perhaps we could have dinner together if you haven't another appointment, hush, we are in a small place in Soho, good Magyar food.

Above a glass of Tokay one talks better and Toby unfurls before the astonished eyes of Igor the pattern of his Lordship's strategy; Kingmaker indeed. So that is why he asked me about the Duke's popularity in Illyria and about whether the Illyrian people would mind the Duke marrying an English wife. Why the dickens does he want to sponsor a paper of mine? Why did his papers press so much for my release? And who is Woodrow C. Macconochie anyway?

Sir Toby is a bottomless source of information. At his age there is not much left but good food and drink and the rather doubtful satisfaction of one's vanity. And this vanity had been badly hurt by Malvolio's insult some time ago. One has not forgotten nor will one ever forget. Perhaps it would be possible to hitch the wagon to this young runner-up. Poor young man, he is so fresh and naïve that the does not understand the stakes for which we play here; it is necessary to take Malvolio's cheques; after all, Sir Toby does him some service too and as we are down to brass tacks, all this is done without sentimentality. But this might be the man of the future, let us stake something on him.

Not that Igor trusts this gourmet, but it is good to get some inside information even if one must discount fifty per cent. of it. As for Woodrow C. Macconochie, well, Sir Toby does not know the Junior's opinions; Papa Macconochie used to be diehard Isolationist but the wind has changed nowadays. The Junior is the secretary of the Mediterranean Society, a body concerned with the building up of Balkan countries as potential markets: They will build harbours, on credit; roads leading inland from these harbours; then, of course, they'll supply the necessary cars for these roads; in short, there will be great investments and the blue-prints are being prepared now. The Americans understand business and they do not want to repeat the mistakes of 1918, when they invested in the wrong people. The Mediterranean Society has been constituted to see to it that this time

it is the right people, see? Thus Woodrow C. Macconochie is not a man without importance. This is an understatement, the English would like it. This young man is so naïve, of course we will never hitch the entire wagon to him, but why could he not be one of the horses?

Not so naïve, thinks Igor, walking through the park. All these opportunities are offered not without second thoughts. But it would be foolish to refuse them because of it. Let us do our best. Everything might be useful—the Duke, Lord Easterfield, the great Post-War design, even that bragging drunkard Sir Toby. The primary thing is to get these supplies down there and to get some hold on the propaganda to Illyria. Never mind the circumstances, never mind the second thoughts. The ice is thin and the white frost on the grass is melting in the sun. Three children play under a statue near Hyde Park Corner, three rosy-cheeked English kids.

A policeman, tall and benevolent, watches them with fatherly looks. How beautiful is it to be a child in England! Peace, quiet, security. One can catch a policeman's hand and be led across the street.

There must have been a hard winter in Illyria. Coal goes to Germany. Food goes to Germany. Olive oil is being used for explosives and potatoes and maize for industrial alcohol and plastics. What is there left to eat? Yes. This suffering must be shortened. Lehman and Cyril must get supplies. Not for a moment will we forget why we are in London. To-day, we are going to our first meeting as member of the National Committee. Of course, without portfolio. But never mind. We shall see to it that at least they shall not forget either.

CHAPTER VIII

FAILURE OF A MISSION

PHILLIP CROMIN sat in his study in the luxurious flat in Kensington. Two windows led into one of the quiet gardens, hidden from the traffic of the street and forming a private oasis for those who can afford the rent.

Cromin belonged to those—he could afford it. Being the leader of the Agrarian Party, he had been one of the shrewdest horse-dealers in the whole of the Balkans—political horse-dealers, that means. Not

that it could be recognised by his face, which had a pair of the gentlest eyes one could imagine, looking into the world from behind a pair of horn-rimmed glasses; Cromin was the son of a poor peasant, of one of those huge families with ever hungry mouths.

His mother meant him to be a priest and after leaving the elementary school Cromin became a novice in the Monastery of St. Joseph in Verst. Two years later, after taking the first vow, he disappeared over the wall of the garden and reappeared a couple of years later as the assistant of a Jewish inn-keeper in a small town near the coast. As he was hard as nails, people soon said that he was more Jewish than the Jew; every penny he earned he lent again at a high interest, and the interest he re-loaned again. He speculated successfully, first with his own money, then with that of other people.

After the first world war, he made money on food, and just in time changed over to industrial crops, such as flax and soya-beans and oil-bearing plants. His nose warned him in time that a crisis was coming, and so he hurried to invest huge sums in the land. When the great crisis of the 'thirties came, thousands of small peasants had to sell their tiny farms; Cromin bought them, joined them into estates, introduced modern agricultural methods, increased their crop three-fold, took the landless peasants back as labourers for miserable wages.

Within a few years he was the most powerful man of Illyria's agriculture and leader of the Agrarian Landlord's Party. When Sebastian suppressed the General Strike, Cromin joined him. He, too, was scared stiff of a revolution which might have led to the expropriation of estate owners; but unfortunately one cannot develop industrial and agrarian policies at the same time. Sebastian was much more interested in his Olivia combine than in maize, wheat, flax or dairy produce.

In the ensuing clash of interests, Cromin was defeated, and when the Germans came and Sebastian took the power into his hands, he had to flee the country.

The mouth under the very gentle eyes behind the black-rimmed spectacles was bitter, like that of a flagellant. What a defeat that was; here was hope of restitution in the Duke's aspirations; what was, will be restored, he thought. And now this so-called "emissary" of the so-called National Liberation Front was strutting up and down in London, trying to get into his hands the most important contacts both with the fatherland and with the English. He and Cardinal Révy had abstained from voting when Igor's case had been discussed. He knew what he was doing. The future would be his. He would see to it.

Outside the window, trees were stretching their branches to heaven in a forewarning of spring. But the man with the bitter mouth did not see it. He was deeply engrossed in a conversation with Colonel Feste and a hunchback called Yester. Yester was an individual, something of an impotent bulldog with broken teeth, ready to bite at his master's order.

Cromin nodded at the Colonel's stream of narrative. It was, so to speak, a fairly exact description of Igor's past activities together with a good account of his doings since his arrival in London. It was astounding how exact the good Colonel's information was. The only thing he did not know was the object his partner desired.

"Now look here, Colonel," said Cromin, "what you have been telling me is pretty interesting indeed, but I have got eyes, too—and so for that matter has Sir Andrew, and possibly many others, not excepting His Highness. However, it is imperative that it is we who shall succeed. You know why we have to. Now look here, Feste, we have got to get that code. Not only mine, but your career depends on that."

Cromin's mouth was pulled into a nasty-looking grimace which suggested a smile, but his eyes looked on as gently as ever. Feste lit cigarette from cigarette, his hands moving in small circles; it took some time before the cigarette was lit. "That will not be easy," he said, "and I am no breaker of safes."

"I never thought of that," said the gentle-eyed professor behind the desk, "never, indeed. Only let us know—or Yester here—where the code is kept and the rest leave to Yester. Your hands must be clean. Same with mine. And then," Cromin continued, "we will have everybody in the bag."

Yes, thought Colonel Feste, yourself included, for after this conversation there will be no withdrawal and Curio will have to put forward his resignation. And then comes my time . . . our time.

Yes, Colonel Feste was a dangerous man. Black and wiry, with Latin vivaciousness and a cold, quick-thinking brain, he had been one of the moving forces of the Illyrian *Deuxième bureau*, the Secret Service of the Army. His was the best post in the whole staff—for whatever the powers-that-be, there were enough files about them in the vaults of the *Deuxième bureau* to keep them quiet.

Even the Duke, Sir Andrew, Curio, and the rest were scared stiff of that man, and General Sebastian would have given God knows what if he got this man with his files into his hands. But somehow Feste eluded Sebastian's grasp and got part of his material, undestroyed, out of the country in time.

Now Feste fumed. Of course, Curio did not dare to take the responsibility on his own shoulders, but, on the other hand, though he had taken him into his confidence, he did not give him all the information he had. Cromin's offer of collaboration thus came just in time.

As long as Cromin was useful to him, it did not matter. Should he become uncomfortable, however—well, there was enough dope in the Colonel's files to blow the gentle-eyed man sky-high. Yes, the code must be got; and it, too, must wander into the Colonel's hands, for that was where it belonged. Obviously such things were the job of Military Intelligence; and with communications with the fatherland in one's grasp, why . . . yes, our ambitions are high, very high.

"All right," Feste said, "I will find out for you the whereabouts of the code, if and when Duval passes it out of his hands. But remember, I know nothing about it." Yes, the rest was Yester's job. And among our files there is a fat one about Yester too, he thought.

"So you don't like London?" asked Mr. Wainwright, sipping excellent black coffee prepared on Magdalen Bruyl's percolator, and Igor smiled: "I am afraid, not much. You know, it is so very different. Very." Mr. Wainwright nodded: "I understand. We are difficult people. The English character is such a complicated thing. . . ."

"Not more and not less than the character of any other nation," said Dr. Bruyl. "Every nation takes time to be known."

"But we more than others," insisted Mr. Wainwright. "We are a slow people. Slow to move, slow to anger. But when we move, why, then we make a job of it." "You might be right, sir," said Igor, "but you don't seem to move."

"That's a misconception of yours, Igor," interjected Dr. Bruyl, righting his pince-nez whose black thread hung on the side of his face. "They do get places, only without hustling. Look what has happened since Dunkirk: they had no tanks then, now they have got a mighty industry. There were no planes, now they have two million men and women making them. They don't talk much, but that's not a disadvantage. But their coffee is miserable."

"But they don't seem to understand the situation," said Igor. "They live as if this was the moon." It's only an island," said Mr. Wainwright. He knew his Englishmen well enough, being M.P. for East Missenden.

Lanky, quiet and well-mannered, he was the prototype of what a continental imagines when he thinks of an Englishman; there was a

slight stiffness and a distrust of easy friendship, a reserve which was difficult to grasp, for Igor who had come only a few months ago, thirsty for action. "The coffee is miserable," granted Mr. Wainwright, "but then, we don't like it. You must get used to our tea. And also to the way our people say what they think. So far you know little about them. You must not judge them from the upper-class people you have met."

"Mrs. Clapson is a good example," said Dr. Bruyl. "You mean the landlady of this house?" said Mr. Wainwright, and Dr. Bruyl nodded. "But she does not bother about anything," said Igor exasperated, while Wainwright shook his head: "She will in time. We need time."

"You see, Igor, they can afford to wait," said Dr. Bruyl. "They are patient. But one day they will speak up."

"But we cannot afford to wait," said Igor bitterly, while Bruyl shrugged his shoulders: "I know Mr. Wainwright knows that, too, but he also knows his people. Still, there will be some progress, when you have met Brigadier Nelson-Alresford in the Ministry of National Defence. Wainwright says that he is going to see what can be done about the case."

"You see," said Mr. Wainwright, staring thoughtfully into the now empty cup, "our people are just waking up. Look at Mrs. Clapson here. Before the war she had never even heard of Illyria, and now, thanks to Dr. Bruyl here . . . she is interested. Give us time."

Igor shook his head. "Until I see Mrs. Clapson demonstrating in Downing Street, I won't believe you."

"She will," said Mr. Wainwright gently. "You just wait."

Igor's interview with Sir Douglas Nelson-Alresford, K.C.B., O.B.E., took place several days later. The Brigadier had a weather-beaten face and a long record of service in the East; his buttons were polished and gleamed on the dark tunic like miniature bulbs; there was a difference in his behaviour towards General Curio and to himself, Igor registered; in the Brigadier's attitude there was a hint of polite contempt for civilians.

Yet in spite of this, the Brigadier seemed an excellent listener; this quality of his had made him the most popular commander during the last twenty years in the district of Saudi Arabia which was in his charge. He had the coolness and impartial sympathy of an umpire during an international soccer-match, an attitude well appreciated by the Arab chieftains, but not so much by Igor, who tried to impress

upon him the importance of Illyrian resistance in the German rear. The Brigadier granted this point. But he was sorry to be unable to do anything at the moment.

"Weapons," he said, "are extremely precious to us now. You know, Sir, how heavy the demands of our own services are at the moment. Besides, there are the Russians. And India. And other colonies. Besides, National Liberation Fronts are a difficult problem."

Yes, the Brigadier was a soldier and he could deal with soldiers only. You know, these revolutionary bodies . . . well, there was always the possibility that the arms could be used one day for different purposes.

"You will forgive me if I speak bluntly," he said, "but there are many people whom we cannot consider as equal partners. Political decisions are out of my hands, but as General Lehman is a soldier, well . . . maybe something could be done. I have here a memo from Mr. John Wainwright, M.P., which I'll pass to the Intelligence Signals. I think there is some sort of code in your possession. Can we have it?"

Igor thought quickly. Evidently they are much more interested in Lehman's resistance than the Brigadier wants me to know; probably they have been in touch with him already and Vargal refuses to deal without the code—which means without me. Good 'Papa,' he is as shrewd as a peasant and we will keep up the line.

"I am afraid I cannot," said Igor, "my instructions were to keep the code in my hands except for a case of extreme urgency. I am at your disposal, of course, for negotiations with General Lehman, but I beg you to keep in mind that the movement of resistance in my country is to be considered as a whole."

H'm yes, the Brigadier conceded this point, but unfortunately he could do not more; it was not his department, anyway. But maybe, in default of a recognised Government, there could be formed an independent Illyrian Brigade in this country. One could deal with them as equal partners—from soldier to soldier so to speak.

Just look at Curio's eyes, thought Igor, they are rolling like a child's when it sees a lollipop; we are bad players in our country, nothing of the self-control of the English; since the formation of the Committee this has been Curio's dream. Oh to be in command of an army again, Curio was thinking, to ride on a white horse past a guard of honour and one day to be pelted with flowers on the streets of Oliville. Yes, we haven't been much of a commander in the past, but then, fighting the Wehrmacht was done much worse by others and maybe we'll get a second chance. But let us probe Sir Douglas: "You realise,

Sir, that such an army cannot but be very small, without much military significance? ”

Yes, Sir Douglas realised it and Igor knew that this was a political gesture which did not come from this straightforward soldier. “Such an Independent Brigade,” said the Brigadier, “would be a partner for us. A trustworthy partner and I am sure that there would be means to equip it. If it could be formed with the approval of General Lehman, so much the better.”

That’s about all we can get out of the Brigadier, obviously he cannot say more; what an exchange, thinks Igor. I want weapons for our people and they offer me a token army. Still, let us prepare a victorious retreat, for even a token army can be of some significance for us. “But what about the movement in our fatherland, Sir Douglas? Certainly we cannot leave them in the lurch.”

“We will not,” said the Brigadier, “I assure you we will not. I will notify the Intelligence that you are unable to surrender the codes. As for the weapons, while this office cannot help you further, I will be only too glad to arrange an interview for you with the Ministry of Armaments. Will you wait for a few minutes? I will ring Mr. Blunden straight away.”

A week later, in the middle of the night, a huge American-built car stopped before Igor’s house to pick him up. When Igor entered the vehicle, he saw the tired features of General Curio; Colonel Feste was with him for the Army Intelligence; as the car moved, the cigarette in Feste’s hand moved in fantastic circles through the darkness and its tip glowed in the rhythm of his sucking. Feste was one of those Latin characters whose loquacity dries up when their hands are tied behind their back; Curio was silent.

The strange conversation he had had the night before with the Duke was circling incessantly in his head; but it wasn’t stranger than the yarn Sir Andrew had spun during the lunch they had together the same day. I wish the Independent Brigade was already established, thought Curio. Blast these politicians.

No, the game of politics, especially the strangely twisted politics of émigrés, was definitely not his cup of tea; how he craved for that ride on a white horse, just behind the flag! What did the two men want him to do? Both were talking around something which they never said. Mother used to call this “walking like a cat around a hot mash.” The Duke always felt ill at ease when he had to look people in the eyes, while the Envoy had the brazenness of a whore.

The Duke appealed to his loyalty, Sir Andrew to his gratitude; and

there was a hint of a threat in the latter's voice. But the two men wanted the same thing: the code. Curio was vain and weak, but such things should not be personal: better let us take Feste with us, he decided, it's his department, anyway. So this visit is 'official' in a way.

As for Igor, he pondered a phrase spoken by Ponsonby, Easterfield's right hand man, when he read on the first proof of *Illyrian Freedom*, the inscription "Independent newspaper," just under the heading.

Ponsonby was a realistic, freckled Scotsman with a judgment which was simultaneously sharp and detached. He underlined the line playfully with his red pencil and said to Igor: "Independent newspapers? Well, I haven't seen one yet. Every paper is dependent on something or somebody."

Yes, that was true. We use his Lordship and are used by His Lordship, thought Igor. Wonder where that will end. At the moment, however, we are "All For Illyria." Do not let us worry unduly.

The cigarette in Feste's hand was still describing fantastic circles, but Curio seemed to sleep. The night was humid and warm; spring was in the air. Strange climate in England: a week ago there were night-frosts, now it was as if the winter was over.

The car stopped before a metal gate which creaked on its hinges as it opened. Igor looked through the windows and discerned the shapes of oblong barracks. The tiny torches used by members of this establishment while approaching the car seemed like jack-o'-lanterns in a bog.

The ground was soft and smelt of humid earth. That smell evoked memories in Igor's mind, memories of mountain slopes and the woman with white feet who had led him at the beginning of his journey. This wet earth smelt almost like Illyrian earth. Almost.

He felt excitement mounting in his soul like the liquid in an over-running fountain. To be able to speak to his own country again and to hear the reply! Until now all he had done was to listen again to the abominable broadcasting from Oliville, run by the "Silver Shirts," or the "free" station of Port Sol, performing a careful dance between the Nazi and Allied eggs.

There: the long tunnel of a Nyssen hut, full of silent faces bent over white sheets of papers, earphones on their heads; listening. Out of the earphones comes the sound of music, of speeches, of harangues. Gramophone records rotate, wax cylinders glisten, then needles register

in endless spakes the impact of words on the microphones. On we go, through winding corridors.

A silent room, three operators, huge lamps dangling from the ceiling, a huge clock cutting noiselessly tiny chunks of time off the endless future. A loudspeaker on the wall trembles and hums, now a voice comes in, an Illyrian voice.

God knows when Igor had heard it, but heard it he must have . . . his hands tremble and pages of memory are skipped back . . . mountains, trees, the deep dug-out . . . yes, it is Guier, the small wiry man with one eye. Good evening, Guier—or is it Good morning? Plop, the loudspeaker is cut off, two Englishmen are in the room, shake hands, a cigarette? Now we are waiting, kick kick kick goes the second hand on the huge clock, one of the Englishmen has a wart under the eye.

Igor pulls out a pad and writes down the code, what a simple code it is: his own birthday-date, to be used in rotation. What a small box full of light is this room puee puepee whistle the morse signs, they are waiting over there, it will be snow on the mountains and here spring is coming.

There, the message—now up it goes into the night. Puee puee puepuepee whistles the Morse. They have got it, contact established. I wonder whether the lanky figure of Lehman is at the dugout with the radio, I bet he is. Donath is decoding probably; now, here goes.

Time flies, soon it will be dawn. Little Colonel Feste sits in the corner, eyes glued to Igor, his hand does not wave any more and on his cigarette a long cone of ashes has accumulated. They knew about this broadcast, probably they expected it.

A long message goes on the air, coded by Igor the day before; a report about London, but what can he say at such a distance? Let us be optimistic. General Curio sends his regards, pause, now the reply comes: "Thanks, all the best, hope to see you soon."

Igor imagines old 'Papa' smiling into his whiskers at this slight irony, but Curio does not see it. Military situation not bad, says 'Papa's' report. Silver Shirts have withdrawn down into the valleys and the Germans are keeping up only skeleton strongpoints. That's that. Where are the arms?

Now they are closing down. Contact you Wednesday next. Every third night at the same time.

Out we step, out of this small box of light into the darkness. The huge car is waiting. A small paper is slipped into Curio's fingers, sealed in a small envelope. The Code. Now the contact is established, the code is no more an individual secret. This man Curio is,

after all, a soldier of Illyria. If anything happens to Igor, the code must be preserved.

As the General folds the envelope and buries it in his wallet, his heart is heavy; he remembers too well the hints dropped by His Highness and Sir Andrew; not only was there no difficulty in obtaining the code, but the man had actually handed it to him as a trustee of their fatherland. How could one misuse it? How could one look Illyria in the eyes? To hell with politics, I wish this was over and we rode on that white horse, he thought. Or at least let us start with the organisation of the Brigade as soon as possible.

But until then, this little piece of paper shall be kept in the safe and will not be handled except on official business—if and when Duval is unable to use it himself. One is old fashioned and there are such things as Honour drilled deeply into one's soul; if the code is handed to any single person, this will be done only with the approval of the Committee as a whole. Yes, that's the solution.

The car slides gently over the macadam in the grey light of the dawn, the wind sings a monotonous melody and Igor sits asleep in his corner. Only Colonel Feste sits propped up, cigarette in his hand, and its burning gleams through the dusk like a suspicious eye.

Now there are family matters to be cleared up. The Duchess drinks tea out of a beautiful china cup, so thin that one can see the liquid inside through the porcelain. Over there, by the window, sits the girl, cigarette in hand. The cup clinks when it returns to the saucer: "Now listen, Marguerite, the Family Council has decided that after finishing the term you shall return to London." There is no reply, except for an angry puff of smoke.

Duchess Viola exchanges the stern tone for a rather soothing one: "Look here, my child, you are of royal blood. Surely the insides of frogs and rabbits cannot be the purpose of your life. After all, you owe this to your family . . . to your country. Haven't you any conscience? And stop that smoking!"

Well well, it is difficult to put on a soothing tone with a hard-headed girl like this one, muses the Duchess. In my youth they would have left her kneeling for three hours on a handful of peas thrown for this purpose on the tiles of the corridor in the convent. She is smoking like a chimney! We must stop this; if only Rudolph were not such a weakling—

There is no reply from the window. The girl sits there, cigarette in hand, her black hair falling past the high forehead beside two grey-blue strong-minded eyes. Not a word from her—

"I know that you would not like to be forced into marriage," says the Duchess, starting gently again. "That's why, when Sir Andrew asked for your hand, I said 'No' to him. Or at least something of the kind. A girl of your breeding should nevertheless think of her duties and look for a suitable political match. Why do you not want to be introduced into society? Edith will be engaged before long and then I will be able to concentrate all my efforts on your happiness. And the happiness of my children. . . ." Yes, that was the Duchess' main concern. Her family. She had sacrificed her life to her family.

Tears come to one's eyes when one thinks of the ingratitude of one's own breed. First the Duke, now this little wench. Let them roll, the tears. Maybe that will soften her heart.

But no, she leaves mother without consolation. She is a hard girl, this Marguerite. Modern education, there you have its effects. Now she kills the stump of her cigarette on the ashtray. The blue-grey eyes are flashing: "Stop crying, Mama. I have told you what I have decided and nothing is going to stop me—your threat of cutting my allowance least of all. If you want to take this measure, do so."

The heavy streaks of black hair fly back in an angry shake of the small gently curved head: "I have economised enough to be able to subsist during the next few months and I will try for a scholarship. Happiness! Little you care for my happiness. You just want to rule me, rule Rudolph, rule everybody!"

There she stands, above the old woman who lifts her tear-stained eyes. Her withered bony hand presses the wet handkerchief in her palm: "You are forgetting that you are speaking to your mother, child! And you are forgetting too that you are still a minor. The law. . . ."

Too late. The girl is lighting another cigarette: "The law," she says between her teeth, "I know. But you are too much of a coward to take that course. Because I would make a scandal, and what a scandal. Think of the lovely rumours. What would society say about the damaged reputations, Mama? Besides, Rudolph would never do it. Not to me. Even if you press him and force him as much as only you can do. He wrote me about his coming engagement to that princess. Poor Rudolph. Still, everybody has his own life to live. Let me live mine. And better give in, Mama. No use crying."

Now let us stop crying for a moment. The Duchess is a highly reasonable human being and in all that anger of hers there is a bit of respect paired with a strange kind of contentment: This is my

daughter. Yes, there will be nothing doing. But appearances must be maintained. Always appearances.

"Marguerite, I will not be spoken to like this. You will go down to to your room and I will see you at dinner."

Now . . . there she goes, a warrior after victory, her black hair falling down on her shoulders. Just as the door opens, Martin comes in: "Your Highness. . . . His Eminence, the Cardinal is here. He would like an urgent interview, if possible."

The Cardinal? Now let us be quick. The wet handkerchief is gone, the thin black figure straightens itself; the sentimental interlude is over—and the Duchess' eyes are as firm as ever. Now we shall plunge ourselves into politics.

Here, with a rustle of his cloak, comes the Cardinal: "I am sorry to bother your Highness at such a moment, without being properly announced. But I have a message of supreme importance for your Highness."

The Duchess bows her head, every inch a ruler: "Please sit down, your Eminence. Let us hear what you have to say."

"This office has gone very thoroughly into the problem," said Mr. Blunden, the Chief Controller at the Ministry of Armaments, "but the matter is much more complicated than we believed at first. Our resources are strained to the utmost." Mr. Blunden cleared his throat and looked at his finger-tips. His face bore an expression of deep grief.

"We all admire greatly the fortitude with which the Illyrian patriots are bearing the untiring onslaught of the Hun. Why, only last week I saw a film about your country, called 'The Last Train from Oliville,' starring Gwenn Hyden and Lillian Somers. Did you see the picture? My wife thought it enchanting. What splendid types your country produces! Yes, it seems indeed somewhat hard to condemn your valiant nation to inaction for some months to come, but they can be assured that in the end all will be well and we shall hand you your country back, liberated and cleansed."

Mr. Blunden cleared his throat after the little speech and looked at his watch. "You see," he said confidentially, "there are big things afoot. Of course I am unable to tell you. You appreciate the reasons, don't you?"

There was a pause. Igor knew that he was meant to go, but he did not want to. Why should one make it easier? He was telling this man about Illyria, and he thought of it as he saw it in a silly American film. No, let us see how Mr. Blunden will get out of it,

definitely not without trouble. Why, even now he was turning and twisting like an eel in a frying pan: "You see, Mr. Duval," said the official, "unfortunately we are not independent in this department. We are only cog-wheels in the production machine. We get our orders, and all we can do is to execute them as well as possible. I am afraid that the decisions are with the higher ups, and however large our sympathies are for such a valiant cause, we cannot cope with such a complicated problem."

Again the official stopped under Igor's quiet gaze. "I know what," he said, "I shall get you an interview with Major Llewelyn-Hudson, my colleague at the Board. I am sure he will be able to help you. Just a moment, I will get in touch with him."

Major Llewelyn-Hudson was a blunt, soldierly looking man. He had grey eyes and a hand-shake which remained one of America. "I am afraid that your request is beyond the reach of this Department," he said, looking stolidly at Igor. "This Board is nothing but the executors of orders of our financial departments. Would it be possible for you to arrange for Lend-Lease?"

It would not. Lend-Lease was possible only when there were the suitable "partners." You must lend to somebody. And a National Liberation Front was just a National Liberation Front. Now what about America? Thank you, we have the Princess Kuno and Bruno over there as you know, making plenty of mischief and not doing much good. So America's out for the moment.

"The case of your forces here—I hear that an army is to be formed," said the Major, "is of course in a different category. As they will be under British Command, the allocation will be done through the usual channels." Unfortunately the workers of Oliville or the guerillas of the Vargal were under different command, thought Igor, but he did not mention that. Instead he said very politely that certainly populations were often armed if that helped to spare soldiers' lives.

"Ah, you are right," said Major Llewelyn-Hudson, "but such a measure can be done only by the C-in-C. of this or that campaign and the weapons in question come from his own allocation. He is free to decide where and when to use them. But this case is different. I am afraid I am unable to help you unless there is a credit for the arms required. Sorry. All my sympathies. But listen, perhaps a credit could be got privately. Suppose you contacted the Phoenix or another big banking house. Suppose you had a word with Sir James Bowhill of the I.A.T. Sir James with his contacts. . . By the way,

haven't you got that man . . . what's his name, Malvolio? Malvolio is an Illyrian. He is *persona grata* here, with our people and your people. Wouldn't he be the best man to arrange the transaction?" Yes, Sir James could help. If not directly, then with credits. But that man Malvolio. . . .

Yes, that man Malvolio, Igor thought. How can we explain it to this Englishman? For him, nations exist as groups of men; he does not see that there are deep differences inside them. Thank you, Major. At least you didn't speak about films.

It was General Curio who actually arranged the meeting with Sir James Bowhill. It took place in the latter's office in the I.A.T. building. Sir James, his pipe between the set of immaculate porcelain teeth, looked more than ever the benevolent old gentleman of whiskey or tobacco posters. His rosy cheeks wore an imperturbable smile, and though he had known in advance what Igor was going to say, thanks to detailed intelligence from Malvolio, yet he listened to the fiery Illyrian with apparent interest.

Sir James felt sorry, very sorry indeed for this very sympathetic man whom he liked from the very first moment; behind that gentle smile of the armament king lay a gentle soul. A widower, Sir James lived quietly in a small country house in Kent, attended only by his old valet and a cook. His daughters were comfortably married to husbands in good positions, and Sir James would visit them a week each in turn. He would always bring some sweets for the grandchildren and sit down to play with the toy railway he had given them for a birthday present.

Besides, he was a passionate gardener; with spring coming there would be daffodils again in front of the house, clear, English daffodils, like cold flame. Fraser said the anemones in the hothouse would open shortly, but the roses might be damaged by the late spring frosts. There had been several nasty ones lately. I hope that the Maréchal Niel bushes are not harmed, thought Sir James while listening to Igor; his roses were a reality which one could smell and enjoy. How beautiful was the orchard in Kent when in full bloom! This man spoke of a country thousands of miles away as if that was a reality.

Only for Sir James this was not the case; his son-in-law, the Hon. John Leary-Fletcher, who was somewhere in the Middle East, was a reality. But, say, six divisions of soldiers, or a hundred thousand casualties, that was a mere number. With realities Sir James was gentle; but numbers, why, that was his job. Numbers were not human, numbers were to be dealt with by simple methods of arithmetic.

He was an expert in arithmetic. Of course, he had once severely thrashed with his walking stick a driver who mishandled his horses; he had a good heart for animals and humans alike—but arithmetic, that, sir, you cannot do with sentiment. This man Igor tried to mix up the two things, tried to confuse him with sentimental arguments.

But however much sympathy Sir James had for this firebrand, when it came to arithmetic and numbers, his brain was cool and precise: The I.A.T. could do nothing for Illyria at the moment, he explained patiently. Why, all the works were busy with Government orders. To equip guerillas—besides the difficulties of transport—was beyond their limits. For such orders as could be placed there could be no question of credits except if they were covered by a guarantee. Armament works are not benevolent institutions. The costs are heavy, wages high, labour scarce.

Besides, at war, the I.A.T. was indeed a mere servant of its Government. Those weapons that could be spared had to be distributed carefully—in the interest, in the ultimate interest even of the Illyrian people themselves. By no means must they fall into the wrong hands.

Yes, it all was clear to Igor: a vicious circle. Everybody wanted guarantees that these weapons were to fall into the right hands. But whose hands were to be considered the right ones? Guarantee. They all wanted a guarantee. What sort of a guarantee? How could one guarantee for a people without a voice? Was not their courageous fight guarantee enough?

"No," said Sir James gently, adjusting his denture with a minute movement of his jaw. Igor had misunderstood him. What was wanted was a partner to deal with, something or somebody tangible. Such help as was required was an investment, and in the circumstances a pretty dubious one; after all, if you lend somebody five pounds you expect to get it back some time, with reasonable interest. That was sound finance. These bodies of National Resistance, that was all very nice; possibly the whole people stood behind them—but anonymous they were and anonymous they must remain; now would you lend five pounds to an unknown person, he asked—to an anonymous person who might never repay or even kick you if and when you demanded payment? That was Sir James's background, and it was a natural one to him.

Where Igor saw a fight for freedom, hunger, suffering, desperate resistance, this man saw numbers. And he dealt with them as numbers are to be dealt with; in order to provide the partner for dealing, a body of trustworthy Illyrians should be consolidated. Whom would Sir James trust? Why, Duke Orsino, Malvolio, Cromin, Sir Andrew.

Such people could not run away with the investment. They could not, in their own interest.

"I am delighted to see you," said Sir James getting up from his chair, "though I am unable to help you. You see, private enterprise is now completely tied up. It is the Department of War Finance that has chained industry to the State. But suppose you had a word about the situation with Viscount Primrose in the Department of War Finance. Possibly there might be some hope of credit. Yes, you must see him. Sorry I was unable to do more for you." Let us hope, he was thinking, that the late spring frost did not harm the *Maréchal Niel* bushes, it would be a pity if they did not open again.

Viscount Primrose was kindness itself, but unfortunately he was not in a position to help. "You know yourself," he said, "how deeply we are indebted to the Americans. I am afraid that you have taken steps in the wrong direction. Not here, but Washington is the place where to apply for credit or supplies. My Controller advises me to tell you that instructions should be passed to your commission in the United States to approach the authorities there for the required arms. My Controller greatly appreciates the magnificent fight your people is putting up against the horrible occupationists, and the suffering they must undergo. But he believes this office to be unable to help you at the moment. Unless your own finance could credit the orders required. Have not some of your banks considerable holdings in this country and the U.S.?"

Yes, they have. But there is nobody who can compel them to give them up to finance an underground fight. The money is *Malvolio's* and he is not willing to give it for a purpose he disapproves of. But just a minute: "Would it be indiscreet of me to ask the name of the Controller of this Department?"

"Why, of course not," said the Viscount. "It is Sir James Bowhill." And that was that.

The party thrown by the Duchess of Sydenham was indeed one of the most glamorous events of the season. Lord Easterfield had prepared the ground with a skilful publicity campaign. For this party was more than a mere assembly of illustrious personages—it was a political gesture; England and Illyria, two countries desiring peace and plenty, united, marching towards a bright future.

The Duchess, of Royal blood, was to be the bond between the two countries; and maybe more, she was to be the bond between England and Danubia.

Danubia—the federation of several small States under the benevolent dynasty of the rejuvenated House of Orsino. Of course, we are presenting these facts with great skill.

We never say them directly, only by implication; but the important point is, that Washington had already given its blessing to our project. On Lord Easterfield's table lie cuttings from the *New York Democrat*, the *Washington Observer*, the *Republican Chronicle*. The Princes Kuno and Bruno have launched a huge publicity campaign for a free Illyria and a Mediterranean Federation under the House of Orsino and the name "Danubia" seems to have caught public attention. What do Americans know about the welter of small peoples in South-Eastern Europe except that there is continuous trouble there—and what more could be desired but that this trouble should come to an end under a benevolent and yet strong hand?

Several Senators had sponsored a body called "Illyrian Phalanx," among them the popular Joseph E. Hudson. The "Phalanx" is led by Prince Kuno, while Prince Bruno runs the "Illyrian Christian Legion," and travels up and down the country making speeches persuading Illyrians in the U.S.A. to join it.

A beautiful uniform was created which led Prince Bruno into an engagement with Miss Claire Francisca Wilmot, the millionairess. Mr. Daryl Merle, also known as "The Riddle of the State Department," regards the whole project favourably. Altogether, in the U.S. things are much riper than in Britain, but that will come yet.

The engagement of Duke Orsino to an heiress of an old English name will certainly be a further step forward to consolidation of our political project. Danubia will be the solution for the South-East European tangle, Lord Easterfield is certain of it, and though our little Duke did not like the idea at first, by now he begins to see light. If and when we are so far, it might be possible to turn the treatment on our good friend Igor Duval. Lord Easterfield had seen the proofs of *Illyrian Freedom*, English version, and had had a long talk with Ponsonby. Independence has certain limits and the Editor's manifesto certainly transgresses these. Yes, to-morrow we shall have a word with Duval. Once the engagement is made known, our bird is caught and we don't need a bogeyman any more; if Igor Duval presents trouble, we shall drop him. Out of the seven papers, only three were for his release anyway. . . .

Somewhere in one of the beautiful Georgian rooms a chamber orchestra discreetly plays a Mozart concerto and the guests are helping themselves at a lavish buffet. Lord Easterfield bows gallantly to

Duchess Viola, while his youngest flutters blushing towards little Princess Edith, whose eyes under the long dark eyelashes sparkle in the lights. The Duchess has a little fan and uses it not without old-fashioned coquetry. For this is a great evening in her life.

The Illyrian politicians are dispersed in the multi-national crowd; Igor is here, Cromin, Sir Toby—everybody except Malvolio. Sir Toby is of the opinion that he hasn't got the money to buy tails and is too mean to borrow one from a costumer.

Igor is tired and somehow he does not feel that he belongs in this crowd. Things are consolidating, but not the way they ought to. If all these are the partners for the game . . . what good is it his being here anyway? Poor Duke Orsino, he looks as if he had taken poison, his shortsighted eyes are sunk even deeper than usual and there is again that tic around his mouth. No wonder, thinks Igor, looking at the future Duchess Orsino, with her frail skeleton, covered by a fine skin, yet pushing its bones in all directions; the prospects of matrimonial bliss look hard indeed.

Sir Toby, his nose glowing like a red bulb, makes some dirty remarks to Captain Valentine, but we didn't catch them. There is Sir Andrew, with his coat moulded to his body, like an otter freshly crept out of a pond, and with him a young girl, black hair falling over her simple dress and grey-blue eyes flashing under a high white forehead. Why, that is Princess Marguerite, who has come from Oxford to this celebration of her brother's engagement. She makes a movement as if she wanted to shake off a fly, now she turns towards Igor and waves her hand with a smile: Ah, an old acquaintance.

Igor nods his head; he does not know the Princess, whom he had seen only twice, but she walks over to him, with an expression of great joy in her face, saying, "So here you are," and adds in a whisper, "Excuse me, but I must get rid of Sir Andrew," her eyes looking like those of Puck when he puts the lovers to sleep in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. What can Igor do? He laughs, jokes, and Sir Andrew somehow loses colour and dissolves into the crowd like a drop of water into blotting paper.

Igor feels somehow at ease, he always liked this girl—it was difficult to remain human in the stuffy atmosphere in which she had lived, but she had managed to keep clean. I bet she looks much better in her white coat standing over the operating table in her Lab. than in this Madame Tussaud's of a party, with all these stuffed shirts and souls. Why, who is this?—that's Sir Douglas Nelson-Alresford K.C.B., O.B.E., with General Curio. They are getting on quite well, but so are we.

The girl does not touch alcohol, and whenever her eyes wander to her brother there is a little mist in them, as if you covered a clear window with a thin curtain. Igor presses her hand, and she repeats the pressure. They look at each other and smile and understand each other as if they had known each other for years.

"Fancy you being here," says Igor, "I thought your Highness was so engrossed in your work that you could not find time to get to London."

The girl looks at him, gravely, and he feels that they are very good friends indeed; she says that she wouldn't have come if it were not so necessary. "Poor Rudolph," she murmurs, "he sacrifices himself for Mama's ambition."

Igor shrugs his shoulders. That is not his business, everybody moulds his own fate and there are more important things to be cared for. Besides, maybe this marriage will be all to the good if it must be.

"You do not know," says the girl, "but something is going on behind the scenes, some intrigue." God knows that there is plenty going on, we have eyes too; couldn't she help? Poor girl, she doesn't know, but she will try to find out.

She is happy to have met Igor, and hopes to meet him again. "Now I would like to dance," she says as to an old friend, "would you . . . ?"—Of course he would. How long was it since he had danced last? Two, three, four, five years. On the terrace in Albergo Stella Rossa in Sermione, in Upper Italy. How sweet the jasmine and smelt over the lake! And the moon on the velvet pattern of the quiet water, and Catullus' villa among the remnants of the luxury cottages of Imperial Rome. My last holiday with Sylvia, he thinks. My God, I have forgotten how to dance—but then, I never was much of a dancer. It was a beautiful time up there, fishing in the morning with the trout throwing itself about when hooked out of the white spray of the Sarca.

This girl has heavy black hair, almost bluish in its tinge, the curve of her neck is like a steel spring, her body is firm and strong. Come come, no romances. Unfortunately this girl Marguerite is the daughter of Duchess Viola and we could get into awful trouble by becoming too friendly. Strange that she reminds me of Sylvia. Yes, one's first great love always impresses one for the whole of one's life and subsequent partners are measured by its accomplishments. Good-bye, Marguerite with the friendly handshake and these jets of black hair I would like to stroke, I shall see you soon again, I hope. But these are things one does not say.

Oyez Oyez, now comes the toast. Viscount Something-Or-Other has the word, the supper is finished. It had been a good supper, the Duke feels much better, his cheeks are flushed by wine, the tic has gone for the moment. Even his bride-to-be looks much better after the repast; pity we cannot be in an after-dinner state all the twenty-four hours. She is a horrible woman, thinks the Duke, begetting children will be really a job and I will have to be careful not to prick myself on these bones. But from the political point of view maybe it is right, it will consolidate our position here and if and when his Lordship's Danubian project comes to life—why not? We shall give up resistance for the moment and will collaborate with Easterfield for a while.

Yes, one has to make personal sacrifices for one's country and for this one maybe I shall be forgiven all my sins. Valerie, do not look so unhappy, this is our engagement day. Poor Valerie, she seems to have noticed my thinning hair and high voice and wonders whether she is going to have much pleasure out of it. Well, ask Peggy, she knows all about it. I wonder what Peggy will say when she sees the news splashed all over the papers—probably not much as long as I continue to pay. One must have some pleasure in one's official life. I wish I could be like young Marguerite, who has been making sheep's-eyes at that man Duval half the night. Hope Mama does not see it, but unfortunately she will. She sees everything. What a woman. She always gets what she wants. Now I am engaged. Poor me.

The door opens and a butler comes in, straight behind General Curio's chair. Strange how pale Curio becomes, he runs out with a hasty excuse, returns in a minute only to wink at Igor. Igor knows that something bad has happened, so he dashes out and the poor General stutters something about his office having been broken open and the safe emptied. The Code! Yes, the Code is gone. It feels as if everything were dissolving in one's hand, the mission had been a failure in any case and now even this weapon is done for.

Poor Curio feels miserable, and assures Igor a thousand times that he had taken the utmost care. We believe you. Never mind, never mind. Toast to the Illyrian legion, as it is going to be pretty soon, fighting for Danubia. Whose Danubia? Orsino's, Aguecheek's, the I.A.T.'s, Malvolio's, Easterfield's. Never mind, Curio, you are going to have your white horse soon. But who could have done it? Yes. Who? Feste. Or Sir Andrew. Let us pass these faces in front of the inner eye; each of them was suspect, each of them capable. Things are moving to a climax. Thank you, General, I have got to

think it over. Yes, now I know. We will call an emergency meeting.

An hour later, without interrupting the party, all members of the Committee are assembled in the library. General's Curio's batman guards the entrance, and Igor listens once more to the General explaining what had happened. Here are the faces he had seen before with his inner eye, but they are as impenetrable as they were before. Only the Duke is nervous, for he regrets that he did not succeed in his weak attempt. Sir Andrew knits his brows in surprise and Cromin twinkles while cleaning his spectacles.

After the General's report, a maze of remarks and arguments; but stop, here comes the bomb-shell: Igor demands a vow of secrecy. He is going to give the whole Committee the code and the pass-words. Thus the partisanship which had been made possible by the theft will be neutralised. No more private communications here. Yes, and this is my exit.

The Duke looks quite melodramatic when he takes the vow into his hands, and now—here I am. The Illyrian National Committee, the guardian of the interests of our people—we hope—knows the secret. General Curio is instructed to leave immediately for the wireless station to call the Vargal and try to change the code. Should we use Feste? We have to. He is the head of the Intelligence—or isn't he? Now this secret—if he had his fingers in it as he probably had—is an official one. If that is good enough to blunt his voracity. His ambitions are high, but so are those of all the others; let us hope they will keep each other in check for the moment.

As for ourselves, well, our game appears to be lost for the moment, the failure of a mission—but that was to be expected. How we little boys in the mountains imagined it was easy!

This is ten times more difficult than stalking German transports on the main-road. Still, we will fight on, whatever the odds. So here, in the midst of a population of forty-five millions, takes place a minor tragedy of a small people without them even bothering about it.

I wonder whether Mr. Wainwright's prediction will ever come true. If and when I see Mrs. Clapson from Camden Town demonstrating at Downing Street for freedom and democracy, I shall believe that he was right.

CHAPTER IX

STORM OVER ILLYRIA

"I AM afraid that cannot be done," said General Sebastian. It had been a hot summer day and even the evening did not bring a cooler temperature. The Venetian blinds of the high room in the Ducal Palace had been shut the whole day, yet their shade did not prevent the stuffy atmosphere creeping in from the courtyard. In the half-empty glass in front of the General was some lemon squash and a row of broken straws.

Those white fingers, which cartoonists of the underground Press usually compared with the claws of a vulture, were busy breaking another one: "It cannot be done," repeated the General, "because our people would not stand for it."

Von Zinzel looked up, his face white as cream cheese; not for nothing was it said that he laboured with severe kidney disease. "You seem to be somehow tenderhearted lately," he said, "especially since the temporary shortening of our fronts. These last months you seem to be particularly worried about what the 'people' are thinking about this and that. What does this term mean? The masses will always follow leadership—that means good and able leadership." There was a threat in his sour voice. "We need another hundred thousand men. Reichsminister Sauckel asked for it and I want to see the man who is going to say 'No' to him. Unless you want to fly to Berlin to have a word with him. My plane is at your disposal. No?"

The General's fingers placed the broken straw neatly in line with the rest of its predecessors. His face was grey, almost as grey as the silver of his shirt. He was in the uniform of the organisation he was head of.

"My dear Envoy," he said in his crisp voice, "there are limits to the ablest leadership. Even our Führer had to recognise this." Ho, that hit von Zinzel squarely between the eyes. "Besides, while Lehman is fighting in the mountains, it is difficult to convince our people that they are really defeated. And unless they are convinced, there cannot be the possibility of honest collaboration with the Reich. And apart from Lehman, there is the comedy of that so-called Free Town with Admiral Antonio. If the Wehrmacht cannot spare troops for the Vargal, at least this sore ought to be eradicated. I do not

wonder that the gentlemen in Berlin do not see it, but you must— you who have been with us for such a long time. . . .”

These Germans are apt to ride the high horse, thought Sebastian, and Lehman is a means to get them quickly off its back; we can see von Zinzel's reactions at once: “The High Command does not consider the Vargal as a battle front. The operations in progress are only local police actions, which ought rightly to be done by Illyrian troops. As for the policy towards Admiral Antonio, he seems to behave with perfect loyalty to the treaty concluded in Dresden.”

Von Zinzel does not much like these conversations, there have been so many of them since things came to an impasse. The situation is so much more complicated than it seemed after the conquest; I wish I could take a holiday in my villa at the Wansee, thought von Zinzel. There is a lovely yacht and one could hang about the little wooded islands the whole day long and do nothing; this heat gets me down.

“If your hot-heads want cooling down,” he said to Sebastian, “send them to the Russian front. As for Minister Sauckel's demands, I am afraid that you will have to comply. The Reich will regard it as a proof of loyalty.”

Sebastian cracked another straw between his fingers: “You are placing me in an impossible position. No, I am afraid that I won't be able to do it.”

“You will,” said von Zinzel, buttoning his tunic, “you will. It has to be, and you will see to it. In your own interest. Heil Hitler.”

Easy for him to go, thought Sebastian. It has to be. But how? In spring there was this business with the Green Division, to fight on the Soviet Front; von Zinzel's special pet, that. The publicity campaign took two months and cost five million leva. Result? Two thousand volunteers. And what volunteers! Crooks, pimps, down-and-outs. A farce altogether. What could one do? A personal order to the Silver Shirts scraped together another three thousand; that was dire need—for one cannot present the Wehrmacht with a division of two thousand men; and on such things one can gauge the loyalty within the Silver Shirt movement. Three thousand out of three hundred thousand. Papers are low—and no wonder. Sebastian was a realist who took the situation as it was.

There was much to be gained out of collaboration with the Nazis. At the time of German invasion we thought: “Let us make the best of our lot.” We did.

Oh, the conversation with Hitler that day! They let me sit in an old Germanic easy-chair and Goering strutted up and down past the window, all the metal on his belly clinking as he moved; he never could stand me. He does not like thin people. One must be at least fourteen stone to be chummy with him. Like Antonio. When Hitler came, I thought, "God, what a dummy. And that has conquered Europe." But one did not think that when he opened his mouth. No, not then. The man was so immensely convinced that he was superior to everybody else. Like Jeanne d'Arc. Hearing voices, and all that. I quite believe it. How he shouted! A hysterical washer-woman. We were dealing soldier to soldier; he loves melodrama—they all do. What a pity we can't play melodrama any more now.

"The German Reich is magnanimous," said the Führer. "We want to live in friendship and collaboration with the peoples of South-Eastern Europe," said the Führer. One did not say too much in reply. One wasn't supposed to. But then came the talk with Goering; horrible man, this fat, jovial giant. His friendship for Antonio is understandable from his whole attitude to life. But he knows business; his Hermann Goering Werke are no joke. The greatest horizontal and vertical trust Europe has ever seen. He wanted to swallow Olivia straight away; the situation was tough, but we did relatively well.

In those days one could play one Nazi against the other. How they hate each other! If you wanted support against Goering, you went to Himmler, to Goebbels, to Frick. You made a little concession there, a little one here—and Olivia Steel was saved from Goering's clutches, of course by giving shares to the rest of them. But those were the good old times. Gone long ago. Horrible villa Goering has. I hope the British have bombed it flat.

Last autumn it was clear that this time Goering would succeed in getting Olivia into his trust. They were a little bit worried, the gentlemen in Berlin, and they stuck together. So we made concessions and let ourselves to be tied up. Of course, he, too, had to make concessions.

How Antonio fluttered around Goering then, but in vain. Still, he kept his fleet. And without the fleet—what else was one but a puppet of Berlin? With the control of Olivia Combine out of one's hand and the fleet with Antonio, there remained only the Silver Shirts.

Sebastian had no illusions. Yes, this is a tough spot, he thought. Von Zinzel is threatening, but then, von Zinzel is also no more than a tool. They could connect an amplifier from the Wilhelmstrasse and

it would be just as good. An amplifier has at least no kidney-trouble or a face like green cream-cheese.

More coal! All right, more coal. Increase production! All right, production increased. So far so good. More maize! The whole of last year's crop has been sold to Germany, yes, gentlemen, sold. We do nothing for nothing. We do business here and at first it looked like good business, even very good business.

Now it doesn't look so good any more. After maize went olive oil, after olive oil, potatoes; after potatoes, rye and wheat—and by God there wasn't much of it!

The *Reichsfischverwaltungswerke*—God, what a name—have formed a huge combine in Port Sol, and are buying up all the fish at the coast and tinning it for the Wehrmacht and Germany; this is the first enterprise here run entirely by German capital. So far they had always permitted a share to Illyrian enterprise; this is a sign of the times.

Illyrian papers are pressed down on the Berlin Stock Exchange; Goering wants to force a majority in the entire Olivia Combine. Sebastian Electrical Works are already under the domination of Siemens Halske A.G., and the "Aero" have been forced to sell 51 per cent. to Opel Flugzeug A.G.; all that goes for Goering.

More production, they shout. But how is it possible to increase production without additional labour? Fifty thousand workers have the capacity of some half a million tons per year. When finished.

What trouble there was with these first fifty thousand! At least they would be properly fed in the Reich, there is not much grub left in Illyria anyway. Now they have started this new huge plant for artificial petrol from coal. When finished, the plant should have the capacity of some half a million tons per year. When finished

But how can they hope to finish it without sufficient labour? And a hundred thousand now to go to Germany. Not to speak of the business side of it, one can foresee the colossal amount of trouble in the country. As if the influx of men to Lehman was not big enough without such artificial stimulus. Von Zinzel has an easy task. I wish I was a German Envoy somewhere instead of being the subject of a German Envoy. Let us have another glass of lemon squash. Terribly hot to-night.

General Sebastian rang the bell. A girl in Silver Shirt uniform, with the badge of the S.Y.W., the woman's organisation, came in.

"Call in the Council," said the General. "At once."

The Silver Shirt Government was the oddest collection of men one

could find in Illyria; a strange mixture of respectable officials with Fascist leanings, downright adventurer and one or two businessmen—one of them a Press-magnate, in miniature, Illyrian scale—who had drifted into the strange company, partly through fear of Red danger, partly scenting profits out of collaboration with Germany.

The most outstanding figure of the Cabinet, Boronski, had once been commander of the cruiser *Illyrian Arrow*. Degraded for embezzlement, he drifted around in civilian life for several years until Sebastian got hold of him and decided to use the man because of his passionate hatred of Admiral Antonio. Boronski was the bulldog type, he bit and never let loose; his head was clean-shaven and the nose stuck like a little pear between two hard, piercing eyes almost without whites. True to his stature, Boronski made his way, climbing step by step within the organisation, until, at the moment of the Illyrian collapse, he was Sebastian's right-hand man. Sebastian watched his aide-de-camp not without anxiety, for the man was getting too powerful and there was no means of getting rid of him.

Another type was Rudin, manager of Olivia Armaments. Rudin was what one would call a commercial pirate; son of a small employee, he had managed to climb the ladder by ruthless cunning. His only ambition, political power, was not to be realised during the old set-up with Malvolio as Chairman of Olivia Steel. The financier's disappearance, however, was the starting point of his career. For it was through him that Sebastian, Prime Minister and Chief-of-State of Illyria, controlled Olivia Steel and the vertical combine of ore, coal and transport which it represented; the Olivia Combine had been the main source of finance for the Silver Shirts before the collapse, and Rudin, sitting on the purse strings, was rumoured to have somewhere in safety all the documents relating to certain transfers which were highly compromising for everybody else in the Cabinet.

Sebastian had this man well under control, having in his hands not only defence, but also the portfolio of finance. Thus, D'Arblay, head of the National Bank of Illyria, was only a figure-head, tolerated as an administrative figure, and Sebastian could sleep in peace as far as finance was concerned. For all the circumstances concerning Malvolio's strange departure, together with the disappearance of all secret documents of both Olivia Steel and the National Bank, remained a secret which Sebastian never conveyed to anybody.

The Minister of Propaganda was Vendal, the would-be Press magnate, once an unsuccessful writer. One day, many years ago, Vendal was shown the door by Loevit, the Jewish publisher, and from that day he never forgave the Jewish race this offence; his anti-

semitic rage had made him a pet of Dr. Goebbels. Though the small man reminded Sebastian sometimes of a bug, his presence in his Cabinet seemed imperative, and useful in order to appease Goebbels; Goebbels hated Goering and it would be foolish to alienate a possible ally against Goering.

The same applied to Pitui, who was Himmler's man. As Minister of Justice he ruled the police, namely, the secret branch of it. The Gendarmerie Sebastian managed to keep for himself. Pitui was in close touch with the Gestapo, and Sebastian knew that reports about everything happening in Oliville were regularly going in to Berlin. He did not mind, so far, for the equilibrium of his administration consisted of playing one Nazi big gun against the other, which reflected itself in constant clashes between the various members of his Cabinet—thus enabling him to remain on top.

To-day's meeting presented one more example of these periodical rows. Bianco, the Chief of Labour-Mobilisation, protested from the start against the new measures; his was a most difficult task, and once more he offered his resignation, which Sebastian could not accept. "The country will not stand for it." He repeated Sebastian's phrase. "There will be large-scale revolt."

Sebastian shrugged his shoulders; there was Pitui to reply, and Boronski. The Police Minister was of the opinion that the quelling of a revolt was the task of the Silver Shirts, while Boronski thought that the Silver Shirts, as a political body safeguarding the State, should not mix in the work of the Police. It was clear that the new order would be fulfilled only at the cost of a great wave of unpopularity for the Silver Shirts, ending possibly in difficulties of considerable extent.

Vendal, the little antisemite, was all for a pogrom. There were still some five thousand Jews in Oliville, carrying their David star on the left side of their chest. It would be possible to burn the old synagogue as a reprisal against an outrage for which the demand of the Reich for the hundred thousand was the reply. Suppose the Jews offended Germany. Suppose the Jews committed one of their periodical crimes, for which the German Reich demands indemnity from the Illyrian Government. In this case it is as plain as daylight that the guilt lies with the Jews, who are the enemies of mankind anyway. Jews are less than. . . .

Stop that twaddle, thinks Sebastian, that's about good enough for Doctor Goebbels. You will never make Illyrians think that five thousand Jews living in a ghetto could damage the Greater German Reich to an extent justifying such measures. Propaganda! That's easy for a time. But not for ever. We must think of something else.

"Mobilisation," says Boronski, "would be the easiest way. If we mobilise three years. . . ." "You will have trouble with that," argues Rudin. "Mobilisation is the last measure, when everything else has failed. There must be another way." Vendal, the Jew baiter, is offended: "Well, gentlemen, if you don't like my proposal, I shall wait for yours."

One must be careful with Vendal, he will report to Goebbels and there will be a nice article, just by the way, in *Das Reich*.

Here comes the bass voice of Pitui, he is drunk again: "Perhaps I might supplement Mr. Vendal's proposal. Suppose there was sabotage. Sabotage ordered from London or Moscow. Of course there would be Jews in it, but not only Jews." "Sabotage," thinks Sebastian aloud, "as if there wasn't enough of it."—

Pitui smiles, a nasty, crooked smile: "What do they know of sabotage? Children. Go slow, a time-bomb—that's all they know. But I shall show them what it means." His breath smells of brandy. That man is a killer. Just the right type for his job.

"You must warn all organisations as quickly as possible," said Stettin to Hendryk, the shop steward of the electric furnaces, "we have news that they are planting *agents provocateurs* in the shops. Watch all newcomers."

The year had left its marks on the huge man. He had grown perceptibly older and his full cheeks had fallen in. That was because of sorrow. Sorrow for his country, sorrow for his daughter. Berenike, his little Berenike, had been mobilised for work in Germany. She was on munition production in one of these notorious slave factories of the I.G. Farben, and there was no news from her.

Stettin lived alone in his old flat in St. Paul's where Igor had once met him; the place was dirty and full of cigarette butts. There was nobody to keep it clean, nobody to cook. Stettin himself had no time. He took his meals in the factory canteen—that meant what they called meals now—and went home only one night in two when there was no meeting. And there were many meetings now. Things were going badly for Illyria.

The days were hot and the nights did not bring coolness. It was as if the heavens themselves had no mercy on Illyria; the supply of wine, the thin wine of the foundry workers, had been stopped. It was said that the Germans produced motor-fuel out of it. One had to drink water the whole day long. The only thing that was in abundance. Yes, things had become much worse.

"Newcomers," said the shop-steward, "that's difficult indeed."

He chewed slowly on his pencil. "Rudin has issued the order for interchange of personnel. They are cancelling the ration books of the families of those who refuse to be directed. Something should be done. And soon. We cannot go on much longer like this. Something must be done," he repeated slowly. "Do not let yourselves be provoked to rash action," said Stettin.

"Do not let yourselves be provoked," aped the shop steward bitterly. "That sounds to me almost like our Fabian on the wireless. They want us to keep still while Lehman is getting arms. All in the name of continuity; of course, you can trust Lehman, they say to each other in London; he's of the old school. A general. Now he is even a Secretary of War. What does it all mean? Do they want to sell us from one military dictator to the other?"

Stettin sighed; it wasn't the first time that he heard these arguments. The appointment—and his acceptance—of General Lehman to the post of Secretary of War in the Illyrian Committee in London had sown deep distrust among the rank and file of the Underground movement in Illyria. Communication and dissemination of news was difficult, and the Silver Shirts pounced cleverly on every fissure among their enemies.

Vendal took a leaf out of the book of Dr. Goebbels who, when discovering that the underground press was impossible to stop, decided to issue several "underground" papers of his own. Leaflets signed "Friends of the People" were appearing widely, attacking everything and everybody, especially denouncing Lehman and the Liberation Front leading Illyrian resistance. A short wave station, allegedly operated by "patriotic Illyrians," operated with the same arguments. This man Hendryk was only one of many.

Stettin shrugged his shoulders: "Look here, Hendryk, Lehman is what he is, but do not forget he has never ceased to fight the Germans. They have put a high price on his head and tens of thousands of our best men are serving with him. You must trust him and us. The Silver Shirts try to provoke us. Now they will be breaking up crews and shops to enable their men to be slipped in. If we let ourselves go at a moment when they want us to, they will break our necks. Now go and tell your men to watch out."

They shook hands and Hendryk slipped out of the corner where they had passed their lunch-time. The siren hooted. Stettin went slowly back to work. He was foreman now in the casting department and his place was in a glass cage in the middle of the shop from where he could overlook the whole expanse of his department. The double strain of being a member of the Yellow Sebastian Union

simultaneously with running the underground work was proving increasingly difficult.

Ten workmen in overalls, Germans, were building a concrete structure at the entrance. That, thought he, will be a pill-box. A man in a silver shirt, tommy gun under his arm, was patrolling the shop; he was only one of a group who were drinking coffee substitute and smoking in an empty office.

The net thrown over the country had been tightened to suffocation. Literally not a mouse could move without it being immediately known.

Yoshin, the new crane operator, emerged from his box. "Hallo," he shouted cheerfully at Stettin, who returned the greeting.

"How's work?" asked Stettin, and the man smiled in return. "Not too good," he twinkled. "Haven't got enough oil. Don't you hear the noise?"

The motor was indeed howling from all parts. A little obvious this, thought Stettin.

"I will get oil for you," he said, and walked over to the Maintenance Department. They are obviously trying to find out who is "disloyal" in shops now, he reflected. We will see to it that they do not find out.

During his conversation with the Shop Manager, a violent explosion suddenly shook the room. A window pane broke and slid with a loud clatter on the concrete floor, breaking in little bits. Another one followed suit immediately after. "Quick work," thinks Stettin, when everybody rushes into the yard.

Sirens howl. A car full of guards with tommy guns tears around the corner. Clatter of feet on the pavement. Smoke rising over the roofs.

The electric furnaces have been damaged. Two ambulances are rushing away. Everything has happened within ten minutes. The pall of smoke grows thicker. Fire guards are racing towards the fire. What has happened? Nobody knows.

Furnace number three has exploded, with liquid iron flying in all directions. Fifteen wounded, four dead. Scores of burned. Stettin walks towards the scene of the disaster.

The shop is surrounded by a chain of guards who are sifting the workers one by one, checking their papers before they lock them up in the cloakroom. Part of the roof has fallen in and white steam rises up to heaven. The fire-guards have the fire under control; electric furnaces are very safe as far as that goes; jets of water play

on the red hot iron which cools down on the tiles to dark, formless stuff, smouldering menacingly.

From somewhere the Police arrive all within a few minutes—as if they had been waiting; one of the Police is in the black uniform of the Gestapo. Nobody can enter the shop yet, but from the other side it is clearly visible that the furnace was wrecked by a considerable amount of high-explosive; it has been blown sky-high, and a furnace is by no means an easy object for explosives.

On the other hand the explosive has been carefully dosed, not more than one furnace is destroyed, and it is number three which was due for shutting off in a week or so. Well, my Hendryk, here you have something according to your taste. Something has happened at last. Only I do not think that you will like it.

The huge man shook himself, when he suddenly saw Hendryk's face among a crowd of workers led away by a cordon of guards. The bomb—or whatever it was, possibly a stick of gelignite—had been cleverly planted. There would surely be reprisals to follow.

A German in a green uniform, with gold rimmed spectacles and a white, pointed nose was inspecting the damage. He seemed completely disinterested, poking with a metal rod into chunks of steel littering the cement floor around the tiles.

Suddenly there was some shouting around the corner, a high yell and curses in Illyrian and German. The policeman in the black Gestapo uniform and three Silver Shirts were pulling, pushing and kicking between them the figure of a young lad, thin chested, sun-tanned, with a David star on his chest. One of the Jews who had been working as a navvy at the refuse dump. There was a ribbon of blood trickling from a skin wound on his forehead down across his face, giving him a naïvely sinister appearance, the appearance of a child who has burned a granary and is led by neighbours before the rightful owner.

Stettin did not think of such comparisons, but his slow and methodical brain suddenly understood the elements of the whole plot. The policeman in black reported something to the man with the gold-rimmed spectacles, who nodded gravely. The youth, who tried to wipe the blood off his face and managed only to smear it over the cheek, was manacled by a Silver Shirt and thrown into a guard-room.

By that time Kornel, the Works Manager, had arrived in his black Mercedes car. The man with the thin nose and the gold-rimmed spectacles let loose a stream of German at him. One could see how Kornel jumped mentally to attention.

He turned immediately the German had finished and said: "Any of the men's representatives here?"

Stettin stepped forward: "Yes, Sir." Kornel didn't even look at him: "Call in a meeting of all stewards here. At once."

Stettin did so by means of the loudspeaker system which had been installed in the whole plant very soon after the Nazi occupation.

It didn't take more than fifteen minutes for the group, consisting partly of sullen, partly of suave faces—according to whether the men were Sebastian's or not—to gather at the yard in the shadow of the assembly shop. The sunlight fell piercing white on the yellow concrete of the yard and the bluish tinge of the steam which was still rising from the wrecked shop.

When the men were together, Aurin, the so called "Chairman" of the Yellow "Worker's Front," stepped forward and reported that everybody was present. While the German, his arms akimbo, looked on, Kornel walked excitedly up and down the row, bellowing accusations and threats.

The Illyrians, he said, were probably still not aware that they were a defeated nation magnanimously treated by the German Reich. There had been petty sabotages, slowing-down, et cetera, and the movement seemed to be growing during the last year. These last acts of terrorism, however, culminating in the wrecking of a most important shop of the plant, called for the severest measures. It was the duty of every conscientious working man to help the authorities to find the guilty ones so that they could be punished. Otherwise, he ended, the whole nation would suffer.

At that moment a uniformed messenger came running from the gate. Kornel turned crimson and his voice jumped to a yet higher pitch: "I have just heard," he gasped, "that a fire has broken out in the aluminium smelting shop of the 'Aero.' There seems to be a real wave of terrorism. This must be stopped. In the name of our Chief-of-State, General Sebastian, I demand the help of everyone of you. Nobody is to leave the factory until the preliminary investigations are concluded. One of the Jewish criminals has been caught red-handed at the bestial job. There is a suspicion, however, that not only Jews are guilty in this criminal attempt against the security of our country. Dismiss."

The German was by now cleaning his glasses with an immaculately white handkerchief. He seemed to look through everybody as if through so much thin air. Whilst the men dispersed, Stettin walked back to his shop. Everything was clear now, he thought: and that new crane operator, suppose he . . . let us act quickly.

Under the eyes of the guard, which had been trebled, Stettin walked towards the operating box of the crane. "Get out, quick," he shouted at the astonished Yoshin. The man was so surprised that he obeyed.

Stettin stepped in: nothing. But no, look: just over there, a small object.

Yoshin who had been looking on with a piercing look made a movement as if he would intervene—come, come, Tiny, look at these muscles. Stettin could break you in two with his left hand—ah, there it is: a box, with a fuse, two sticks of ecrasite. "Paul, Fred," shouts Stettin, "hold him!"

How they jump at Yoshin, how they hold him; there, three guards are running up the gangway, tommy-guns ready to shoot. Yes boys, you are just in time. "I have caught a saboteur," says Stettin, and the two workers hit the crane-operator over the ears before they let him go.

As the guards march to the gate, Stettin follows them. Now we are going to make a statement. Why should we make it easy for the Silver Shirts? Of course they are going to release him in the end. Why, he was planted where we found him at their orders. But at least they won't have an easy job to get him out. No, not the shop-manager. Let us walk directly to Kornel. And there, too, we shall deposit our evidence.

The German with the thin nose and gold rimmed spectacles looks on without giving a sign of life. He has got a look like a pin prick, but we are not in the mood to be pricked.

When evening comes, the moon stands high in the sky. The carefully blacked-out buildings of the factory stand in the silver light like white and black toys. The gates are still guarded, nobody is let out or in. The night-shift stands crowded before the thick bars covered by a silent Gendarmerie cordon. They are still investigating.

In the shops work has stopped, the shadow of sorrow lies heavily in the air, and rumour runs like a flickering flame up and down through the night: A train has been derailed on the Main Yard, a hand-grenade has been thrown at the bronze bust of Adolf Hitler on Victory Square, the old church of St. Vitus at Villanova has been mined and five old woman and a priest killed. Who has done it? Anarchists, Communists, saboteurs. The rumours travel so fast that it is difficult to believe that they are spontaneous.

Out of the guard-room where the thin Jew is held, comes a whining that makes one's blood turn to water. It is not loud, but penetrating, cutting through the noise of machines. Stettin understands every-

thing; he could predict what is going to follow. His huge body aches for action. Yet nothing can be done. A row of camouflaged lorries, their lights dimmed, is pulling up in front of the Northern Gate, the whole crew of the furnace walk in a melancholy row towards it; two Silver Shirts drag the young Jew behind; he cannot walk, he staggers on his crooked legs, his face indistinguishable in the moonlight and darkness.

The workers are silent; one or two voices are shouting "Perish Judah" but nobody joins in. The black Mercedes of Kornel follows the procession. Now the gates are opened, and sifting through a cordon of the Gendarmerie the sullen crowd of the day-shift is trickling out.

Aurin, the chairman of the Silver Shirt "Worker's Front" has called a meeting of all shop-leaders. There is a room in the Management building at their disposal. Yes, since the Silver Shirt "revolution," employers and employees are just one large family. Behold, the Management even provides offices for their meetings.

There they sit, in the sharp light of powerful lamps, in almost military order, while Aurin presents them with a resolution to sign. A resolution, asking the Chief-of-State for the most ruthless measures against the villains disturbing law and order and the peaceful progress of the Illyrian nation.

Stettin's huge body is immobile in the corner, his face is phlegmatic and disciplined. His signature will be needed, he will have to give it. Only inside that big head with the swollen veins, thoughts are boiling in a slow anger and despair. How much longer, oh how much longer will it be possible to withstand this agony of a double game? Even this powerful mind is beginning to crack and there seems no hope of liberation.

The night that follows is one of those feverish nights which have happened every three months or so since the occupation. On Adolf Hitler Square a crowd of Silver Shirts in uniform and civvies is marching up and down in a strangely orderly demonstration, a few teams are shouting the Silver Shirt slogan, "Fatherland, Discipline, Obedience," an improvised choir of youths chants monotonously. "Down with the Jews." A military band plays a marching tune and on the balcony of the Ducal Palace Sebastian, flanked by Vendal and Boronski, takes the parade.

Pitju is not there, he is very busy. The concrete building of the Police Headquarters hums with activity and an incessant stream of lorries passes in and out of the gate. The day has been a great victory

for the man, who, behind his black mahogany desk, spouts out orders like a volcano. A bottle of brandy is almost finished and a beautiful glass—one of those egg-shaped, thin marvels which one can hold in both palms of one's hands to warm the drink—lies smashed near the waste basket. Two packets of English cigarettes are almost empty on the desk and the telephone bell rings a succession of xylophone tremolos, as patrols go out and lorries of prisoners come in. The campaign has been minutely prepared and timed.

Pitiu is drunk with spirits and success. The crowds are moving down towards the ghetto, the telephone reports that the old Synagogue of the eleventh century, one of the oldest buildings in Oliville, has been set on fire. Young boys in Silver Shirts are pulling out Rabbi cloaks and masquerading in a grotesque pantomime in the mediæval street in the light of the flames. The fire services, which have been given the alarm by a passer-by, are stopped midway by a cordon of Silver Shirts, and forced to look on as the flames devour the ancient pointed roof, which falls in followed by a Christmas tree of sparks. A little boy of twelve performs a comedy aping Jewish rites, surrounded by a circle of yelling mates; it is a grand night for youth.

"Five more years," shouts Boronski into the four microphones in front of the balcony of the Ducal Palace, "five more years like this and nobody will recognise Illyrian youth. Youth has fallen for our glorious Chief-of-State, our Leader, General Sebastian, body and soul. Even if the older generations, living on memories of the past, of the social rot leading to the catastrophe of the General Strike, of the muddle of the capitalist past or of their plutocratic power still cannot understand the New Order, Youth belongs to us, Youth is ours."

Yes, thinks Cyril, standing crowded among the railwaymen's delegation which has been commandeered straight from his shop to this demonstration, Boronski is right. Five more years and nobody will, indeed, recognise our youth. Amazing what they have done in the last year. Built youth camps all over the country, taken little boys and girls from schools and given them flags, drums and uniforms. Every child likes to play soldiers—and if you make the game real, what a joy it is!

This time the Silver Shirts chose their moment very well and struck before we were prepared. When he had called on the old priest who had sheltered Igor after the meeting last autumn, the door was open and the furniture of the room was in disorder. So Father Lorenzo was gone—probably they had got him in the late afternoon—and it was lucky that Cyril himself was not caught. How many

of our people have they got to-night, he wondered. As if it wasn't difficult enough to keep things going without this last coup.

The communications with Lehman which had so carefully been built up were almost cut now, with Pitui taking lessons from Himmler's Gestapo. Things had not been in the best of order anyway since 'Papa' began negotiating with London. Of course, he had made good and his army was now supplied here and there with wireless sets, surgical instruments, automatic weapons and the like. But what about us here? Well, thought Cyril, the General has probably forgotten the times when he had to send Duval to Oliville to get more supplies from us.

It's time we sent somebody to him now to help us out—unless he has really turned traitor and desires to wait in his mountains until the war is over and he can occupy Illyria to reinstate the Duke with all his satellites representing the old régime. Is this all that blood and lives have been sacrificed for?

"Five more years," booms Boronski's voice out of the loudspeakers, "and a happy Europe under the leadership of the Führer of the German Reich will be a reality."

"A reality, a reality, a reality . . ." repeats the echo coming from loudspeakers in the boulevards and side streets in the tense two seconds before the cheering starts. Now little Vendal steps forward, and a harangue against the Jews follows. The sky is red in the direction of the ghetto, probably the fire is spreading.

And I believed that such things were possible only in Germany, thinks Cyril. True, only a small fraction of our people are deceived by these rogues, but their poison is slow and all-powerful. And there we are, packed in a crowd of helpless men, unable to move a finger, wondering whether this time they will get us or whether the blow will fall on somebody else for the time being. I have often wondered what happened to Duval. Lehman will probably know the background of what happened over there, but it would be necessary to arrange a conference with him to find out the exact situation. Yes, if and when we can get together, we will send an emissary to the Vargal to clear up the situation. It cannot go on like this much longer.

"A train was derailed this afternoon," says the crisp voice of Sebastian through the loudspeakers, "a train full of German soldiers who were leaving our country where they have been recuperating after their heroic fight against the Bolsheviks. Eight of them have been killed. I have appealed to the Führer of the German Reich for clemency and have expressed my readiness—in the name of the

Illyrian nation—to expiate the monstrous crime. If then there are any unpopular measures demanded by the circumstances, our people must understand that these have been caused by the Jews, and those who, cloaked under various names, are working for their purpose.” Ah, the cat is out of the bag, thinks Stettin, to-morrow morning we shall know what it is the Germans want.

Von Zinzel, who has been looking on from the window of his palace overlooking the square, retires into the room. He is tired; one ought to safeguard one’s health, he is reflecting, and let us hope that one will be able to get to Carlsbad before long. The left kidney is gone and the right one is like a sieve, Dr. Münzer said lately. Nevertheless, one cannot but appreciate the ability of this man Sebastian. He has certainly learned the lesson well enough.

Von Zinzel was a Junker from Königsberg in East Prussia. The youngest son of a soldier’s family—his elder brother was commanding the 12th Tank Army on the Eastern Front—he had been always of a weak constitution and therefore designed for the diplomatic service. After serving eight years in London he returned to Germany with a violent hate for the English, a hate strangely mingled with admiration.

Though despising the Nazis, being an aristocrat of the old school (he got on pretty well in England and almost married Evelyn de Villeneuve, the youngest daughter of the Dowager Duchess of Worcester) he became an ardent supporter of the National-Socialist Germany, this being, in his opinion, the only way for Germany to regain an imperial position in the world.

There was an affinity between him and General Sebastian, which both of them felt in spite of superficial antipathies. Yes, it was like being co-passengers on a giant ship sailing under the Jolly Roger through a storm into the night. The future was dark, but one did one’s best to reach it.

I wish I was on the Wansee now, thinks von Zinzel, his cream-cheese face greying with tiredness. The meeting outside was finished. The square emptied itself, with the military band playing and the crowd dispersing amidst the shouting of various slogans.

When one is thrown for the first time into prison, one’s thoughts are inevitably that it cannot be true. Indeed, the cell in the underground of the Police H.Q. was a fantastic sight. Hendryk was pushed into a small room which was so overfull of human bodies that there was literally no place to set one’s foot. Some of the prisoners

had to stand, the other part sat down; turns were taken and the discipline was good.

The crowd was very mixed; there were workers, shopkeepers, one or two well-dressed middle-class men and two school teachers. There was also an old priest whose tunic had been torn. Hendryk recognised him at once: it was Father Lorenzo. He wanted to feel his way to him, but the old priest shook his head with a small movement. No, this was not the place for conversation. Among the forty men or so in the small cell there were certainly spies to get first-hand material. Indeed, there was a lot of loose talk going on which might or might not be meant as provocation.

A tall man, very long, whose only dimension seemed to be his height, he said, with an unmistakable St. Paul's accent, that so far as they were concerned, things were finished. If they were not convicted they could be deported to Germany. A group in the corner started to sing old, proud songs. A young lad leaning against the wall sobbed continuously and was not to be stilled.

The old priest watched all this with a quiet detachment; he knew that, with his past, it would be difficult for him to get away.

It was not until the small hours, when the noise of the lorries outside and the rapping of orders penetrating through the walls were the only sounds audible, that he approached the half-dozing Hendryk to whisper in his ear: "If you get out, do not forget to give Stettin the following message: 'Sausages from butcher at usual price, paid in advance.'"

Hendryk opened his naïve blue eyes at this strange talk, but the priest was very earnest. There was in his face something of a martyr, Hendryk felt. Without letting a sound escape, he repeated with his lips only, once or twice, the strange message. The old priest nodded, and moving his right hand as if he wanted to bless him, he walked slowly through that human Gehenna back to his old place and, wrapping himself in his tunic, closed his eyes.

It wasn't until three months later that Hendryk was released. He did not experience the worst, though during the long cross-questioning he was hit several times over the head by an especially brutal questioner who was angry at not getting any information out of him. Indeed, that was an impossibility because Hendryk did not know much except his contact with Stettin and the strange message given to him by the old priest.

He couldn't tell what happened to Father Lorenzo, because the inmates of the cell were divided next morning among the various

prisons in town; there must have been several thousands taken that night from whom Pitui's police fished out carefully those they really wanted.

The rest were sent to Germany—as the tall man from St. Paul's had predicted—or returned to work if their job in Oliville was considered important enough.

In the meantime the plot hatched out by Sebastian's Cabinet had been brought to a successful conclusion. Instead of capital punishment, demanded at first by von Zinzel in the name of the Reich for several hundred men, the penalty was "converted" into a debt to be paid by an "additional labour force" of a hundred thousand men and women.

Vendal's propaganda offices incessantly broadcast appeals to the population explaining these demands by the attitude of Jews and terrorists. Von Zinzel understood the game they were playing and kept check on the results, which so far were very good. The revolutionary movement seemed paralysed, and simultaneously an addition was made to the strained labour of the Reich. Not a mean achievement for these difficult times, with the triumphs of German tactics lately becoming rather sparse. Yes, Berlin was satisfied for the moment.

There was, however, one point which Dr. Zimmermann, of the Mediterranean Division of the Gestapo, wanted to know: whether or not von Zinzel was sure of Sebastian's loyalty to the Reich. There were some doubts in Berlin—though no doubt they suspected everybody these days. In any case, von Zinzel did not know of any disloyal deed by Sebastian. And the success of the latest move was certainly due also to his own untiring efforts; why should one suspect a partner in a success?

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE OF THE B.B.C. AND THE SIXTY-SIX PAPERS

It actually started with a broadcast. A wireless talk is not a serious matter, it just goes through one ear into one's head and out again by the other one; but if you speak to Europe, you must be careful. On the wall in the office, just in front of Igor, was a little board, and on it, in huge letters, was the following inscription: WOULD YOU RISK YOUR NECK TO LISTEN TO THIS TALK?

You wouldn't, Igor thought. He remembered himself, in the small canteen in a tiny village in the mountains, listening to foreign broadcasts; one was so hungry for news, but mostly one got talks. There was, for instance, the education of small negroes in Somaliland; descriptions of harvesting in Canada. Or a pep-talk about the villainy of Dr. Goebbels, together with a denial of his lies about the Battle of the Atlantic. There we were, cold and hungry; potatoes again for dinner; what does it do to hear about rich stores of grain in Alberta Province?

But that was going to change, said Mr. Butteridge. Of course, mistakes were made, but mistakes were human. We were learning from them. "From now on, we have decided on a new policy," said Mr. Butteridge, "I am happy that you have decided to help us. We want the advice of nationals from the countries we are speaking to. Now we all know about your dramatic escape, and the Governor is sure that your contribution would be widely listened to throughout your country and thus be an important contribution to our political warfare. As to the theme of your talk, we will give you complete freedom. We trust that you will know best what to say to your people."

"Thank you," said Igor. "I did not expect such freedom, we had different notions outside. I thought there was censorship."

"There is no such thing as censorship," said Mr. Butteridge, "not in the least. Only we hope that you will say nothing . . . er, unpolitical. The difficulty is in keeping Europe quiet for the moment. Instigation to premature action might lead to catastrophic events and useless casualties. Having this in mind, you cannot make mistakes. But please regard this only as guidance."

Very good, then, thought Igor, we will keep that in mind.

"Your draft is excellent," said Mr. Butteridge. "Mr. Jameson, the Director of European talks, was delighted with it. The only thing we suggest is that the weight of your talk should be placed on peaceful collaboration within the framework of a future Europe. I believe that this could be done without greatly altering the conception of your speech. But regard this merely as guidance, please, we would not dream of influencing you in any way."

"But if you are going to place the greatest weight on the future," said Igor, "how can you get the people interested in the present fight? I think that the talk should be just in the opposite direction, to intensify the struggle. To sabotage. May I suggest that you start a campaign for Illyria called 'School for Sabotage?' You know, our

people are a peaceful people. Underground war is quite new to them. They find it difficult yet. We could help from here. Would you suggest this course to your Director?"

"I am afraid that this proposal of yours, though admirable, will be difficult to set into our general policy. However," said Mr. Butteridge, "if you wish, you can talk this over with Mr. Ambrose. I am afraid I do not feel competent enough to decide on such a point."

Mr. Ambrose, the Director of Mediterranean Broadcasts, looked awfully busy. There was a crowd of Editors sitting around the office, all in shirt-sleeves, papers and pencils in hand, and the telephones on the desk buzzed in harmonious unison. For a man like Igor Duval, however, Mr. Ambrose broke off the conference with a wave of his hand. As some of the editors began to move out, he waved his hand again: "You can stay here, boys. I am sure you will be interested to meet Mr. Duval. Well, then, Butteridge, what's wrong?"

Mr. Butteridge explained Igor's suggestion. Mr. Ambrose nodded: "Excellent idea, that, Butteridge. As a matter of fact, I thought of it a long time ago, but not in this form. 'School for Sabotage.' Very good."

Igor looked at Mr. Butteridge, who was slightly uneasy. "I am glad to hear that," said he, "because Mr. Butteridge told me that it was not feasible."

"On the contrary," said Mr. Ambrose, "not only feasible but actually very good. The only point I would like to make is whether it is practical at the moment. As for your present talk, I have the pleasure of conveying to you the congratulations of Mr. Jameson, our Director, who said it was brilliant. The only point he made was that it might offend certain people whom he did not think should be offended at this particular time. Has Mr. Butteridge told you already?"

I should say he did, thought Igor; but just a minute: "What does it mean, that the weight of my talk should be shifted towards the future?"

Mr. Ambrose waved his hand once more, like a magician his wand: "At this moment we do not want to antagonise certain quarters who are not very loyal towards the New Order. It would be foolish to bank entirely on a certain class of the population. Now you know well that in your country it is not only the common people who are our allies. There are others, at least just as important allies. Or potential allies. It would be foolish to antagonise them with premature talk about sabotage. I am sure you understand."

Igor was silent. Mr. Ambrose waved his hand again, like a gracious

flywheel: "If I beg you to rewrite your script it is by no means that I would like to influence you. You have complete freedom as to treatment. I am sure that you will understand our difficulties."

"Your talk is brilliant, indeed," said Mr. Jameson, behind his desk in the white-painted room with glass doors, behind which one could see innumerable heads bobbing over innumerable manuscripts. Dictation in all the languages of the Tower of Babel was murmuring through the air like the rustling of leaves in a forest. "Brilliant," said Mr. Jameson, and Mr. Ambrose, this time with jacket, nodded; Mr. Butteridge didn't matter any more. He was forgotten.

"The only thing which rather stings my ear is your rather . . . rough choice of words—'Traitors,' 'to deal with them shortly,' 'no pacts whatever,' 'Quislings,' etcetera—isn't that more vigorous than the situation demands? It would be unwise to drive wedges between the people of your country. I thought you knew that."

"Of course I do," said Igor. "Not to speak like this means to drive wedges." Mr. Jameson shook his head, rather sorrowfully: "You forget that we have to cater for a multi-coloured audience. You are far too political. Could this not be modified?"

"But this war can't be fought with politeness," said Igor, exasperated. "You have got to call black black and white white."

"Quite," said Mr. Jameson, "only I think it very difficult to recognise colours at such a distance. For instance, your attack on the Church. Your consistent use of the word 'Fascist.' There are neutrals who might feel offended by such adjectives. If you modify these, I shall be most happy to have you on the air. But please, do not consider this advice of mine as any attempt to impose on you. Far be it from me to censor you. But your script is so brilliant that it would be a pity to spoil it by a few rash adjectives."

"I am happy to inform you that Mr. Jameson has passed your script," said Mr. Butteridge into the telephone when Igor inquired about the fate of the rewritten speech. There was a proverb in Illyria about 'Feeding the wolf but leaving the goat untouched.' He tried to act upon that line. "You will be on the air Friday next, at nine-thirty precisely. Would you come to my office before you go into the studio? Maybe we can have a drink."

"Thank you, Mr. Butteridge."

At precisely half-past eight Igor entered the office of Mr. Butteridge. Mr. Butteridge smiled like the moon in its last quarter: "I am so

glad that you have come in time," he said. "There are some new suggestions and we were worried in case we should have to postpone your talk. As you have come so soon, however, perhaps we might have a shot at it."

"A shot at what?" asked Igor. "I understood that the talk was passed?" Mr. Butteridge toyed with the corner of the script. He evidently did not know how to express his grief. "As a matter of fact," he said after a while, "there are no cuts suggested this time, but only a modification. There's something to add, I mean. Perhaps I had better take you to Mr. Ambrose."

Mr. Ambrose was not there, so off they went to Mr. Jameson. Mr. Jameson greeted Igor like an age-long friend: "Pleased to meet you again, Duval. I hope that you will collaborate with us often. Sorry for these last-minute changes—but you know how things go in the news-world—and we are a kind of paper, or we should be."

"Do you want me to speak an advertisement then?" said Igor innocently, and Mr. Jameson laughed: "You continentals have such a direct approach to things that we in our insularity are sometimes shocked. But let us be serious: Sir Wilfred Whitby, the Governor of Continental Broadcasts, has just received directions to change the line of Illyrian broadcasts. That is the reason for the unfortunate incident," Mr. Jameson coughed.

Igor used this opportunity to slip in: "In what sense?"

Mr. Jameson shrugged his shoulders: "What we have got to do at this moment is to try and consolidate the political situation. Sabotage and all that is very nice, but there is too much danger of partisanship. Therefore we have decided to cut our talks for the moment, except for those stressing unity of purpose between ourselves and various circles on the Continent. All controversy is to be dropped."

"You mean that you want me to advertise His Highness and the rest," asked Igor, and Mr. Jameson folded his hands: "Please do not use such strong words. There is no pressure of any kind here. Surely you understand how precarious our position is, especially as far as foreign broadcasts are concerned. The only guidance we can get is from trusted members of representative bodies, such as the one of which you yourself are a member. Now in this case we have been advised against your speech because of momentary political expediency. Unless, of course, you are prepared to modify it. But, please, do not think that I desire to impose on you. Your script is so brilliant that it would be a pity to spoil it by a misguided rashness. Perhaps in this

case it would be better to postpone it for another, more suitable moment."

The broadcasting talk that night was given by Captain Valentine, the brown-skinned, sun-kissed sailor who had been the naval aide-de-camp to the Duke Orsino and now was running a few Illyrian ships which had gone over to the Allied side at the time of the invasion. Valentine was a sailor, and his theme was "Anglo-Illyrian Naval Friendship—from the Middle Ages until To-day."

This was definitely a less controversial subject and more in the line of what was wanted at the moment, Sir Toby thought. Sir Toby, formerly dependent on other people paying for his lunches, was slowly getting into a position when he could afford to pay for the lunches himself.

Using his position at the Mediterranean Institute and the Anglo-Illyrian Fellowship, he had slowly but surely acquired the stature of an expert on Illyrian affairs, especially since the new "Danubian" project had attained something like semi-official sanction.

Besides his salary at the University and the substantial cheques from Malvolio which still were coming in—albeit Sir Toby never forgot the insult sustained during the formation of the National Committee—there was now a further little addition from the funds of the B.B.C., whose Illyrian adviser Sir Toby had become.

How much Lord Easterfield's influence had contributed to this it was difficult to gauge, but definitely part of this advancement was due to his good word with Mr. Wilmot-Moresby, M.P. for the constituency where his Lordship had his manor, and who, in turn, said a good word to Sir Wilfrid Whitby, Governor of Continental Broadcasts.

Sir Andrew's excellent references did the rest; every lunch time one could see Sir Toby in the "Casa Pedro," the excellent Spanish eating-place opposite the broadcasting-place half-way between Illyrian House and the broadcasting offices.

This new status brought Sir Toby additional petrol for his Bentley, bought almost brand new from a peer who had been called up into the Coldstream Guards, and one must say that he knew how to enjoy life.

But there must be due credit paid to his efficiency. Indeed this man, who had the air of an innocuous connoisseur of good food and wine, knew how to strive hard when it came to attain fulfilment of his ambitions. Stretching his hands for a virtual monopoly of Illyrian Official Propaganda he did not find it in the least surprising when

his Lordship invited him to a lunch in his office. Seven National Papers in one hairy hand—that was a lot to guard and so Lord Easterfield had to be modest as far as lunches were concerned; they came from the nearby pub.

Easterfield Press Buildings hummed hive-like as usual, but inside the sanctum telephones were for once cut off. His feet on the desk, Easterfield was disclosing his plans to the jovial Sir Toby. Yes, as we know, the man Igor Duval had been given the Editorship of 'Illyrian Freedom'—for tactical reasons which were not going to be disclosed now. It would be, however, a misconception if Sir Toby were led to believe that Duval was going to get a monopoly of Illyrian Press opinion. "That," said His Lordship, "would be in opposition to the Freedom of the Press for which my papers have been constantly fighting."

Sir Toby nodded. Freedom of the Press, yes, that was a very good idea. But what was Easterfield driving at?

"I am unselfish enough," said His Lordship, "to realise that it would be unwise to concentrate so much power in the hands of one individual. However tempting that might be to me—and you know there is much talk now about concentration of public opinion in single hands—I still believe that to preserve democracy one ought to have more than one channel of public opinion. Do you think there would be interest in yet another Illyrian paper in this country?"

Sir Toby pondered the answer: This, he thought, means that Easterfield wants to finance a competition-paper to Duval's 'Freedom.' Do not let us be too quick in accepting, otherwise the price will be low. And why should the price be low? No, let us haggle a bit, we are patriots and we sell ourselves only if it pays.

Simultaneously with this conversation Woodrow C. Macconochie Junior had a long talk with Cromin.

"I am pleased that the Macconochie Press will give me the chance to break the attempt of Mr. Duval to establish a virtual monopoly about Illyrian news," said the gentle-eyed professor with a purring voice. The American nodded and grinned in a most friendly manner: "Yes, it is a pleasure; we in the United States have been watching with disquiet how radical tendencies are spreading among the Allies. At least among some of them. That's one of the reasons why the Mediterranean Society was created. There are sufficient funds to stem any attempt against law and order. We shall be only too pleased to put them at your disposal. Of course, Lord Easterfield likes to

support his colleagues from abroad and I shouldn't like to interfere with him. I think, however, that Illyrians of conservative thought ought to be encouraged to raise their voices."

Cromin was listening with interest, his eyes wandering around the room. From time to time he fixed a searching glance on the American, but the latter's smile was as impenetrable as the hide of a super-heavy rhinoceros.

"I shall be pleased to write the required series of articles," he said slowly, "but I imagine that you imply more than that. Is that so?" The other man nodded. "But I haven't got much experience," said Cromin, "and besides, I am not the right man for such a job. I am a politician."

"Quite so," said the American. "Quite so. It is men like you that we need. Men with understanding for the needs of our times. Men with a realistic grasp of the situation. As for journalists, there are plenty of them on the market. The paper will be self-supporting, of course; I am sure there will be sufficient advertisements to help the finances."

"It is time the voice of the Church was heard above the din of battle," said Cardinal Révy to Pastor Solon, the chaplain to the Duchess. "Many of our flock are misled into sin and disloyalty. With a subversive press springing up right and left there is no firm rock upon which their faith can stand. I think that a paper ought to be edited, presenting our people here—and, of course, our friends abroad with the right opinions seen from the Christian angle, *sub specie aeternitatis*."

"An excellent suggestion, Your Eminence," said Pastor Solon, "only I am afraid that it would be extremely difficult to obtain the paper required and also there are considerable financial difficulties. Would not a monthly bulletin be sufficient? As you know I have issued one by rota-printing so far, and it was. . . ."

"It was insufficient," boomed the Cardinal's voice. "Now, when Antichrist is calling with a richly endowed voice, the Truth must arm itself with shining armour. By the way," he said sotto voce, "make a note of this, an excellent title, this: we will call the paper 'Christian Truth': For God, the Duke, Illyria. As far as the paper-supply is concerned, don't worry, Solon. There will be . . ."

"For such a purpose, Sir," said Colonel Feste, "there always will be an allocation. We cannot and must not leave our soldiers under

the influence of possible adventurers, who, taking advantage of present circumstances, might disrupt our ranks."

General Curio shook his head: "But you do not mean to say that there is any danger of internal strife?"

Colonel Feste lit a cigarette: "Well, Sir, lately there have been some rumour campaigns which might lead before long to infringement of discipline. I think that soldiers ought to be forbidden to read any other papers, once an official Army paper is established."

"I am afraid that will not do," said Curio, "the English would not permit it."

Feste knew the answer. "In that case," he retorted, "it will be possible to forbid the hawking of all papers except the official one. After all, our soldiers are garrisoning a lonely stretch of coast; it will be difficult for them to get other papers if they are not available in the camp."

But Curio was still not satisfied. "But the political implications," he said, "will be considerable." "Not less," retorted Feste, "than if nothing is done. Please keep in mind, Sir, that our army here is not an army of any military value. Its significance lies in the future. And when Illyria is liberated, certainly you would not like to see it occupied by a Corps infected with subversive ideas?"

"My right honourable friend, the Minister of Information, has made, as he always does, an excellent speech in defence of the Government position. But if I may convey to the House the impression his speech made on me, I would put it this way: he was, if I may say so without impertinence, persuasive and sincere. Indeed, so persuasive and sincere were his arguments, that he very nearly managed to convince himself of the rightness of his point of view and very nearly carried conviction to me. Before his speech I thought his position unanswerable, but I did not know that it was unanswerable to such an extent." There was a sound of "Hear, Hear" in the House, and Mr. Wainwright used the moment to blow his nose, which he did discreetly enough.

In the Front Bench, Mr. Allan Jeyes, the Minister of Information, surveyed the situation with a tranquil eye, his hands folded on his abdomen; his sad face and the characteristically folded hands were a welcome target for the cartoonists, especially Mr. David High, the famous Nestor of the trade, who would draw Mr. Jeyes as a salmon or an anchovy surrounded by potato-salad.

With that sadness of his the Minister listened to Mr. Wainwright's harangue before giving the reply: "I am afraid that my honourable

friend for East Missenden must remain without a definite reply. The Government cannot but retain the only line possible, namely non-intervention in other nation's affairs."

There were cries like "This is our affair" and "Shame" in the back of the House, but the majority of M.P.'s gave Mr. Jeyes a hearty cheer. Mr. MacLachlan, Member for Kinlochlan, Ullapoolshire, who had been popping up and down during the last twenty minutes trying to catch the Speaker's eye, used this occasion to slip in: "I protest against Scotland being made the breeding ground of alien intrigues. Is it not enough that our Scottish lassies are being deported into the various war-industries of England? Is it not enough that. . . ." But here his speech was drowned in the "Ah's" and "Oh's" in the House, which continued until the Speaker got up and restored order by a simple contraction of his brows.

"My right honourable friend, the Minister of Information," said the indomitable Mr. Wainwright, "has still failed to give an adequate explanation as to the sixty-six Illyrian papers now appearing in this country. Sixty-six, that means, so far ascertained. There must be many more, published by various individuals and organisations, some of them highly vicious in tone against allied interests in this country and friends abroad. It would be interesting to hear about the source of their supply of paper."

On the Front Bench there was a moment of quiet, which was used by the member for Camford for an interjection: "There is Freedom of the Press in this country!" "This is Bolshevism!" shouted a fellow partisan of his, Mr. Wilnot-Moresby. "Positively Non-British," said an old gentleman with a crop of white hair, with an audible expression of disgust. Mr. Wainwright turned to the Speaker: "Please, Sir, would you call my Hon. friends to order."

"I am not your friend," shouted the member for Camford, hiding quickly before the impact of the Speaker's eye. "Is the Hon. Member talking to me?" said the Speaker severely, but it was not clear to whom he was addressing himself.

"I am talking to you, Sir," said Mr. Wainwright, who fought the battle with a tenacity worthy of the Battle of Agincourt, and he did not retire even when the Speaker replied that "it would be better if the Honourable Member tried to catch the Speaker's eye."

At this point, the Minister of Information deemed it wise to get up. He refolded his hands in the new position and said sadly: "As there is so much feeling in the House about the subject, an inquiry into the supply position will be made and I promise the House that it

will be a careful one. I hope this will be enough for my Hon. Friend for East Missenden."

When Igor arrived at the printer's to see the proof of the new issue of *Illyrian Freedom*, he was informed that so far there had been nothing done as the issue of the paper had been stopped from "above." Ponsonby was non-committal, for, during the long time he had been with the Easterfield Press he had seen many a meteor rising from the unknown, burst into flames lighting the news-sky for a few moments and disappear again into darkness. Besides, to run politics at the same time as a journalist's career is far too difficult a job. Of course, Jack Seymour from the *Megaphone* managed to do it for some time, but once he became an M.P. his political conscience was far less pliable to his Lordship's radical changes of course, and one day he had his column taken over by a colleague, with himself out of it. Well, the only thing he could do was to tackle Easterfield himself.

"Not in?" says Igor to the telephone. "But surely he is, Miss Trilby. Of course, you have your instructions."

We had better do a bit of gate crashing, straight through Miss Trilby's office, into the inner sanctuary of the Easterfield Press.

There we have his Lordship, just in conference with Woodrow C. Macconochie Junior. They have been discussing shipping, oil—or was it politics? Their interests are large and Illyria is small. The American turns round and welcomes Igor with one of his famous boyish smiles, while Lord Easterfield whirls his bulk through space to shake hands: "Ah, it's you. If you had not come, I would have had to wire you. Cigarette?"

Thank you, let us smoke quietly, watching his Lordship give a performance on five telephones, issuing instructions in the voice of a captain of a man o' war. Now he is ready and turns towards Igor. "Well, Duval, you have probably come because of that minor disaster which has befallen our project. Well, I expected something like that to happen."

"What do you mean, my Lord?" asked Igor, and his Lordship went on like the spluttering of a machine-gun: "Well, you see, they have been cutting us down to the bone. The supply people, I mean. And now, on top, this parliamentary inquiry into our paper supply; I am afraid they have taken our quota away, and I cannot spare any from the bare minimum reserved for my papers."

Igor killed the cigarette on the small china ashtray. It went on smoking, stinking furiously. "That means that *Illyrian Freedom*

won't be able to appear any more," he said, and Easterfield nodded: "I am afraid so. But don't let it discourage you. We all have to make sacrifices. Besides, I think that this is not the time for manifestoes and alarms. Our people must not be distracted from the great effort in front of them; if that is any sort of consolation.

"Distracted," said Igor bitterly, "why, that is not the right word for it. Strange that just *Illyrian Freedom* has been picked out of so many papers published here. Was that because I did not support your 'Danubian' project?"

"Please calm yourself, Duval. You Continentals are always so excited about trifles. It was decided that our little paper was not necessary for the war effort of this country; I am afraid I am powerless about that. But you will be always welcome in the columns of our press."

"But the closing down of this paper will mean that the National Liberation Front will have no speaker in the allied countries," said Igor in desperation; but here Mr. Woodrow C. Macconochie Junior took a bit of tobacco from his lower lip and said as gaily as possible: "Now look here, Duval, a people in subjection cannot have 'speakers,' as you call them. Of course you guys from Illyria, all of you, are telling us that you and only you have the right to voice the opinion of your people; but you can't get your Illyrians to demonstrate by a show of hands for whom they really stand. And, mark you, one paper more or less will not change the situation."

Yes, that's that. They are decided and further talk is useless.

But still, don't let us give in so easily: "As you are so well informed about Illyrian affairs, gentlemen, I hope you know about the campaign against the Duke in Sebastian Press and on the radio?"

Not exactly. They would like to know more, but let them find out for themselves. That will be the end of his Lordship's Danubian project. Duke Orsino's marriage with the Duchess of Sydenham is not accepted exactly as a love-match. Sebastian's papers are using it as an argument that the Duke has sold out to the English and, as you can read from the monitoring reports, they are running a campaign on these lines in order to discredit him. This is a partial victory, we have shown our teeth but we know very well that there is nothing much else that we could do.

"I will not take much more of your valuable time, my Lord; you are busy and further discussion between us would not lead anywhere because I cannot modify my point of view and it is not likely that you will modify yours."

The Moor has done his duty, now he'd better go—we are translat-

ing Shakespeare back from Illyrian into English; is it in 'Othello' or in the 'Merchant of Venice?' Never mind, it is the sense that matters, not the words.

"The trouble with you, my Lord"—this is Igor's parting shot—"is that you often disregard what the people want to say, when framing politics. I hope that you don't do the same in your business, or the Easterfield Press will be in a bad way. Well, good-bye."

These are Sir Andrew's flowers, and he is proud of them. At least so he says. He has been living quite a time in England, thank you, and after ten years or so even Illyrians begin to get acclimatised. That is, if they have money enough to create an artificial climate. In his own country he was never much of a gardener, but after so many years in the mellow atmosphere of the British Isles—well, he takes a pride in his garden, somehow.

Malvolio is not much interested in flowers or gardening, but even after a vegetarian lunch one had better take a stroll, and so the two men walk slowly through the garden of Sir Andrew's country house in Sussex. It is one of those houses built in Tudor style with guaranteed Tudor wood and Tudor bricks on a Tudor site and formerly belonged to Princess Romanoff, the great-great niece of the late Czar of Holy Russia; yet Malvolio did not come to admire architecture. The years seemed to pass by the small man, who had not changed much after all the dramatic events he had experienced—except, maybe, that he had grown yet more lonely and that his passion for music had grown so strong that he bought a magnificent electric gramophone and did not pass one night without listening to one of Beethoven's or Brahms' quartets, shut up in the small house he had bought on the outskirts of the town.

But he did not come to see Sir Andrew because of that; there he walked, without relaxing his tense little gait, listening to the diplomat's account of news from Illyria. Sir Andrew felt much better these days. The consolidation, felt by everybody, affected him also; the days when the little man had smashed his first attempt to put together a National Committee were forgotten.

He spins the account like an interesting yarn, with innumerable remarks and anecdotes: things over there did not seem as stable as they had been for a time now. Admiral Antonio had been reading the symptoms well, and the screw had been tightened to such an extent that a decision must be expected within a short time. Von Zinzel had been recalled to Berchtesgaden, and Ribbentrop had come to Oliville for a series of talks with Sebastian.

Sebastian pretended to be ill; he had hated Ribbentrop since he was snubbed at the Germany Embassy in Oliville in the days when Antonio played tennis with Goering. But Ribbentrop telegraphed for the best physician in Munich, Professor Sauerwied, full of sympathy—and under his care Sebastian had a magnificent recovery and the talks began. After three days, Ribbentrop went, but Dr. Berndt came instead, from the Ministry of Production. Every available Silver Shirt leader came to a huge conference. The Nazis wanted more production, also the speeding up of transport.

Sebastian explained that there were two difficulties: the partisans and the good old Admiral. The Germans were non-committal about the first item, as for the third time they had been defeated in the ranges of the Vargal, but as far as the Admiral was concerned Sebastian's complaints were just what they wanted. Dr. Berndt called him to Oliville to the conference. The Admiral arrived in his most magnificent uniform, all gold and epaulettes—with the Croix de Guerre in a prominent place.

Von Zinzel, who had returned from Berchtesgaden that very morning having had a dressing-down there, commented on this prominence of a French medal, but the Admiral only smiled nonchalantly and explained that this decoration was a reward for his bravery in the last war when he fought, as is well known, against the Germans. What sort of a face von Zinzel had made, Sir Andrew did not know, but he knew what Antonio had replied when Sebastian got angry and charged him with deliberate obstruction. He said . . . but that is unprintable, and, to make matters worse, he said it so loudly that the whole conference heard it. His officers laughed and Dr. Berndt almost swallowed his pince-nez. From the point of view of the Admiral, this cockyness is interesting since it points to a certain tension between himself, Sebastian and the Germans. Yes, Antonio is developing favourably.

That was roughly Sir Andrew's comment, and this was, in his opinion, more important than the non-committal messages by which the Admiral had replied to several of Sir Andrew's communications via Florin, the Envoy to Portugal.

The small man calculated quickly, like an accounting machine, and in a twink of the eye he had assessed the situation. "What do you think it is that keeps the crisis back?" he asked finally, in his listless voice, while the Ambassador stopped to correct a leaf of lettuce which was squashed under the glass-cover. Sir Andrew straightened himself: "Ah well, most probably Sebastian and von Zinzel cannot agree whether Port Sol shall be occupied by the Silver Shirts or by the

Nazis. When they have decided, you can take a suite in the Dorchester. Antonio will not live anywhere else."

Malvolio walked on through the sunshine. A butterfly tried her coloured wings on a twig. "I suppose they should wait," he said at last, slowly. "It goes too quickly."

"Wait for what?" asked Sir Andrew, now more arrogant than ever, and the small man turned his lidless gaze on him, brutal and frank: "For the formation of the Government, I mean," he said, so softly that Sir Andrew burst out laughing: "Like that time, when I tried my hand?"

But the small man was not amused, and Sir Andrew's smile died on his lips. Careful, this small man is dangerous, he thought. No jokes here, I forgot that he has no sense of humour.

"By the way," said the small man slowly, "this time you'd better not buy Illyrian shipping until I advise you to. You might lose the rest." The Ambassador bit his lips now. One day somebody is going to kill this little rat.

"Have you any news from Easterfield?" the little man asked. "I hear that he has given Duval an ultimatum." This man hears everything, I wish I knew how he does it, thought Sir Andrew, who had got the news from his Lordship himself and wasn't going to forward it to Malvolio. That, and the fact that communication had been established with the H.Q. of General Lehman via the Second Bureau, independently from the British. That was Colonel Feste's achievement. "If Lehman accepts," said the small man as if in reply to his thoughts, "the I.A.T. as well as the Phoenix Bank are going to take it as guarantee, I hear."

So he knows even that, thought Sir Andrew, I'd like to know what he does not know. Oh, yes, he does not know how to live, he has a spider's life, sitting in the centre of his fine net and listening to its vibrations in the wind of reality. He doesn't even feel triumph, he has no vanity, nothing. Horrible man, thought Sir Andrew, let us have some tea quickly; I must wash this down somehow, maybe Livesey will still have some China tea. China it must be, this afternoon.

"I have concluded the preliminary discussions with Washington," he said, "according to your directions. The Illyrian Brigade here will be equipped under Lend-Lease, but Merle insists that political consolidation comes first. They want to see a Government before they invest. I think it will be necessary to send somebody to the States within a short time."

Malvolio turned back towards the house. Again the wheels of his

mind turned noiselessly like a calculating machine: "Maybe His Highness could visit the States on a goodwill tour. And Sir Toby could go with him. To make matters better, perhaps Cromin could go on a similar mission and the two would check upon each other."

Yes, Sir Toby takes one's cheques, but there is hate in his soul; Malvolio knows that he will never forget the humiliation which he had made him swallow some time ago. If he could, he would stab him in the back; yet Toby is too weak to do that, too comfortable. He wants a car and money. Good food and comfort. No, he will not dare to bite; only people who did not care for anything were equal partners for the small man who knew that money is precisely nothing. He himself did not care for it, that's why it stuck to him. And Sir James—Sir James cared only for flowers and good tobacco for his pipe.

That same week-end there was another conference in "Unity House." This time it was in honour of a guest, the well-known Igor Duval, who had come to discuss the situation. The atmosphere at the hostel had changed slightly for the better; one by one the refugees were drawn into the British war effort and with employment there arose a much more cheerful mood. Not that the hostel smelt less of disinfectant; a little bomb damage had increased the cockroach plague, and little Ida, who had now the proud title of manager, made frantic efforts to get the house clean.

Old Nemir worked in a nearby small factory, producing parts for aircraft. He had succeeded in inducing Dr. Vitel to accept a job at the same plant; poor Dr. Vitel. He seemed to be born with two left hands and there was no week in which he did not cut his fingers or at least tear the sleeve of his overall. He was the standing joke of the shift and he seemed to mind that a lot; if one is born a lawyer—and Dr. Vitel was the son of the son of a lawyer—one is not very prolific in producing stamped aircraft parts.

However, the few shillings more per week seemed to have a good influence on Mrs. Vitel, who did not wail any more at night, except on special occasions. There were rumours in the hostel that she was with child again, but that remained to be seen.

Professor Tibo had found shelter in the bio-chemical laboratories of Oxford and therefore arrived belatedly.

Besides the inhabitants of the hostel there were a few more guests: Dr. Bruyl and Lubomir Bratui, the peasant leader, who had so far refused to have anything to do with any organised movement; but now things had changed. The situation was such that the coming

together of all was urgent. In view of the situation it was necessary to speak up with one voice.

There was an excellent dinner. Isaac Levit, former rich merchant of Oliville, surpassed himself this time; despite privations during the first hard days his figure seemed to inflate as the years went by. His main complaint was that people did not want to believe that he had no money; and what was a merchant without money? No money, no credit. No credit, no business. Isaac Levit could not get on in business. Besides, his fate and that of his country made him think. For the moment, though by no means converted to altruistic ideals, he devoted his energies—which were considerable—to the running of the hostel, which he did efficiently indeed.

But after the dinner the meeting started. Its main purpose was the setting up of a united programme for Illyria. Igor's idea was to continue to stay on the Committee, trying to apply pressure from all Illyrians in Britain. Also, possibly, to rally the support of Illyrian immigrants in the United States, of which there were several millions.

Lubomir Bratiu, the peasant leader, could be despatched to the States; the predominantly agricultural population of Illyrian origin always had great sympathy for their brethren in the fatherland. That would be a blow to the Agrarian Landlord's Party and Cromin, who were sailing under the banner of "Prince Kuno's Illyrian Legion" there.

Fabian was very much against such projects. What he wanted was to break up the Committee and build on its ruins another one led by his party. "And by yourself," shouted Nemir, waving his tooth-pick belligerently. "We know all about it. You fancy yourself a new Lenin, but you might boil down to a Trotsky."

Fabian retorted hotly and Nemir fenced with his tooth-pick like one of the Three Musketeers. In vain Igor tried to calm down the two opponents; it wasn't until Dr. Bruyl got up that both men stopped. Bruyl had a look of serenity which made even the hottest heads cool down.

"I do suggest that we stop this personal twaddle and get down to realities," said Dr. Bruyl. "What we need is a plan of action. We have powerful friends among the British people, but they need facts; we are here to give them facts, not personal attacks. When we have a programme, we will find ways of putting it through. Now, please let us get to work."

The meeting lasted into the small hours, as such meetings usually do. Igor took the old man home; as they stepped into the night

Dr. Bruyl took his arm and they walked silently through the blacked-out streets. Their steps were echoed as in a grotto and Igor had for a minute the feeling of a man lost in a petrified sea with the stony waves of London's houses towering about them in her foreign vastness.

"You know," he said to Dr. Bruyl, "I sometimes wonder what I am doing here. Seven million people, all living their own lives; a great people, but very, very foreign. So I get frightened from time to time. I ask myself whether I have not lost myself. As in a dream."

"I know that," said Dr. Bruyl. "When I was young, our teacher once took the whole class for a school excursion into the country. We slept in a small village with an old early Gothic church and a cemetery with old tombstones tumbling about each other. There was a tale that the place was haunted. Anyway, our teacher decided to give us a lesson. I still remember that night: our teacher knew the fright which small boys get into at night, and so he first asked whether we were superstitious. Of course, everybody denied it—I think I was thirteen at that time. 'All right,' he said, 'now who is going to go into the cemetery and write his name on the pedestal of that huge tomb-stone in the middle of it?' We were all scared stiff, and then somebody pushed me forward, as boys sometimes do. He looked at me and I said yes, I would do it, out of sheer pride. He looked at me with a sort of smile and then gave me a piece of chalk and shoved me out into the night. It was just about midnight, and an owl was sitting somewhere near the church, miaowing at the moon like a desperate cat. I remember how I partly ran, partly crept, tense and breathless, hectic with expectation and fright. Somehow I managed it. Next morning they went to have a look at my autograph on the tomb-stone; it was not very calligraphic but it was there and I didn't tell them how scared stiff I was when I suddenly met the white shape of a cow in the darkness of the village street." The old man shook in silent laughter.

"Do you find any similarity between your position then and now?" asked Igor.

"I don't know," mused Dr. Bruyl, "probably there is some, otherwise one would not have similar associations. Yes, that enterprise seemed to me then the most daring thing a man could do," he went on. "I felt fifty times like running away, but I didn't—God knows why. Perhaps that's the parallel between now and then." The old man walked in silence.

"One day you will find your name on the pedestal of history," he

said quietly, "even if only the history of a small country. I like village cemeteries, there's a lot in them and I'd give a lot to be buried in my native Sviata. It might yet turn out that all the frightful ghosts we are seeing now are in reality like that cow that night in the village street."

"You mean just cattle?" asked Igor, and they both had to smile.

"I say," the old man changed the subject, "when you are as old as myself you are able to see many points of view at once. However, sometimes it is necessary to decide between two of them. Then one must forget the other one, once the road is chosen. Here is my house. Thank you very much for bringing me here. And don't forget to come again, when you need me."

Igor walked home. The night was misty but not cold. Later it began to drizzle; though he had no raincoat, Igor did not mind.

When Igor entered his flat he had the feeling that there was somebody in the room. There was a faint scent in the hall, a perfume which seemed familiar to him.

During his stay in London Igor had not cared much for female company; he did not have time for flirtations and hadn't been long enough in emigration to settle down like the majority of refugees, who lived sometimes in very strange matrimonial entanglements; even if he were here for a long time he would still feel somehow like belonging to that army which lived in constant danger, hunger and privation far south in the mountains of the Vargal. But this perfume, that was a woman.

Igor switched on the light in the living-room, and there she was, a small girl, huddled up in the easy chair, blue-black hair obscuring the white, delicate shape of her face.

It isn't every day that one finds a Princess sleeping in one's flat, and Igor smiled to himself, though he did not know what all this meant. He walked over to the easy chair and put his hand gently on the girl's shoulder. She shuddered and opened her eyes, easily and without sleepiness, like the petals of a blossom.

"Well," said Igor, "it is a great honour to find you here—but as you see I feel rather embarrassed."

Indeed he did, but Marguerite was suddenly full of great urgency: "There was something very important I had to tell you. I am sorry to disturb you but I had to come. You see, Mama thinks that I have left for Oxford, but instead of going to the station I drove straight here. The housekeeper let me in, and I have been waiting for you

since last night. . . . So I fell asleep as you didn't return until so late. I hope you . . . you don't interpret my presence . . . wrongly."

She blushed and Igor had to smile: "Certainly not," he said, "only I hope that nobody knows of your coming here. Not only because of you, but because of all I stand for. You understand?"

She nodded. "Of course I do. But now listen. Ever since my last visit to London I have wondered about the meaning of a short talk I overheard after a . . . dispute with Mama. She . . . she wanted me to leave Oxford, and . . . never mind. Cardinal Révy came just as I left, I was very angry and sat down with a book. I didn't want to listen, you understand, but somehow I heard it; he had had greetings from Beatrice—that's my sister who is married to Prince Alberto Torlonia of Italy—and . . . he spoke of Admiral Antonio and how useful it would be if it were possible to persuade him to join us here in London. I didn't catch what Mama replied—the Cardinal has a churchy voice which penetrates through seven doors even if he whispers. When I returned to Oxford, I thought of writing you . . . but then I thought it better not to and forgot about it, because there was a zoology examination." The girl blushed again.

"I understand, Your Highness," said Igor, "please go on."

"Don't call me 'Your Highness,'" begged the girl, "I am just Marguerite. But listen: When I came up for Rudolph's engagement, there were such strange whispers all around the house, that I wanted to tell you about it at the party, but you disappeared. But now . . . now I know. I came into the room when Sir Andrew was having tea with Mama and Rudolph, and he was just saying that the situation at home was at a climax and that Antonio's arrival here was imminent. Mama turned to him saying, 'Hush, the child is coming,' and he broke off in the middle of a phrase and looked at me strangely . . . because I hate him so much. He wanted to marry me, you know, but I hate him so much. He wanted to buy me like . . . like an insurance policy, like an investment. . . ."

Her complexion was so fine that every emotion produced a blush. She seemed to be very nervous, in contrast to her usual firm attitude.

Igor felt a wave of tenderness towards this bewildered, sincere girl, but he forced it back. The news he had just heard had perturbed him greatly; though there were many who knew of the pending development, it had been well kept within the reliable circle.

"You don't know any more?" he inquired, but she shook her head. "They didn't say a word about it afterwards, and Mama asked whether I had heard anything after Sir Andrew had left. I said 'No,' but she didn't believe me, I think. She was eager to get me

away; usually she tries to keep me. I thought I'd better tell you, and so I came here." Her eyes were very soft.

"Thank you, Your Highness," said Igor.

"Marguerite," she corrected.

"All right," he smiled, "Marguerite. And now you'd better go to sleep. There is a spare bedroom on the other side of the hall."

She went to bed like an obedient child. Igor took his trenchcoat and walked into the rain. Soon it would be morning and so much must be done before then. The cold rain beat against his face as he hurried through the deserted crescent in the hope of getting a taxi.

CHAPTER XI

ENTER ANTONIO

EVER since the early autumn days a year ago, when Admiral Antonio discovered the first barge full of Germans in the inner basin of Port Sol, the tension between himself and Sebastian plus von Zinzel had been gradually mounting. Of course, the Germans had excused themselves then and the officer captured was "severely reprimanded" and punished by a transfer elsewhere, but Antonio knew from the look of the situation in Europe that his position in the "unoccupied Free Town" of Port Sol was by no means a rosy one.

Just to show that he was not scared he had pinned the Croix de Guerre over the rows of medals on his huge chest, a gesture which made von Zinzel and the Silver Shirts seethe with rage. Though it gave Antonio pleasure to snub Sebastian and especially his old enemy Boronski, he well knew at the bottom of his heart that all these were mere pin-pricks, gestures of a condottiere, showpieces of mediæval splendour which warmed one's soul, but that a show-down was imminent.

As long as things went well for the Germans, they could afford to bargain; but now things definitely did not go very well; not to speak of the fighting fronts, they had not been able to crush even Lehman's mountain army, ill-equipped as it was.

At the last visit to Port Sol, Bäuerlein, the Nazi shipping tycoon, had tried to charter practically the whole of the Illyrian Merchant Fleet. The Admiral put his short feet on the gilded frame of the renaissance fire-place and blew a few smoke rings before he gave his reply; that reply was only one word: "No."

If the Nazis thought that the familiar technique of "step-by-step" conquest would work with him, they were mistaken. They had to decide either to give in or to jump; they did not want to jump, but the Admiral knew that circumstances would force them to take the risk; with the deteriorating situation in the Mediterranean the beautiful Illyrian Fleet was far too tempting a bait.

Keeping strictly within his neutrality, the Admiral had fifteen of the most modern merchantmen—many of them belonging to the Adriatic-Aegean Shipping Company—chartered to the Portuguese. Another dozen went to Turkey, some more to Spain. It was murmured that on board there were many pieces of his splendid art gallery, looted from the palaces and museums of Port Sol.

In his communications with Lisbon or the Vatican the Admiral was strictly non-committal. He well knew that the Gestapo and the Silver Shirts, Boronski and Pitui, had, independently of each other, bribed the couriers to Lisbon and Rome and that his messages were carefully studied by their intelligence.

Livel, his right hand man, wanted to shoot the Courier, but Antonio held his hand on purpose: Was this not the simplest way of fooling both adversaries at the same time?

By this simple stratagem it was possible to keep them misinformed about his true intentions and mislead them by little hints now in this, now in another direction. All through the spring the Germans were kept guessing, but when summer came they could not wait any longer.

When the situation in the Mediterranean deteriorated, Marshal Goering, remembering their old friendship, invited the Admiral to Germany, but Antonio had a heavy cold and had to refuse. An offer of a German specialist was politely declined, as Antonio's personal physician was perfectly capable of coping with the illness. Sebastian raged, of course, remembering his humiliation at the hands of Professor Sauerwied.

At Goering's instructions, von Zinzel arrived to express the Marshal's best wishes for the patient's speedy recovery, and the Admiral received him in his magnificent golden bed with its canopy of heavy Chinese silk supported by four guardian angels of pure gold. This bed had belonged to one of the last Doges of Venice and was captured in the battle of Corregio by the Illyrians.

Antonio explained that the bed was quite comfortable, in spite of its age; there were some compresses wrapped around his body, which made a pathetic sight. Von Zinzel sat and talked for half an hour, a picture of icy irony; when he left, Antonio called his wife, a buxom

opera singer of Juno-esque form, and advised her to pack her personal suitcases. He also ordered Livel to call together all officers loyal to him for a conference.

The Germans jumped without previous warning. They took their chance of getting as much shipping as they could and they had planes ready to prevent any of the ships from escaping. Unfortunately for themselves they entrusted the job to a large portion of General Sebastian's army, because Sebastian insisted on it on the grounds that he needed some bolstering up of his prestige.

The Germans, who needed manpower for their fighting fronts, had to a large extent entrusted to Sebastian the policing of the country and so had no choice but to give in. Still, units of their seventh Air Fleet under Marshal Sonnenbrunn, the parachute expert, which were available to the German Command, were to strike with their parachute forces and dive-bombers together with the ground forces. The area of the Free Town proper was small enough, but for conditions of secrecy the forces for the assault had to be assembled at some distance, otherwise Antonio would have got wind of it in time.

These preparations, elaborate as they were, were unfortunately well known to the Admiral, whose Intelligence even within the Silver Shirt Movement worked very satisfactorily. All that night before zero hour there was muffled activity in Port Sol, feverish and yet subdued.

A German reconnaissance plane, sent out at a very great height, reported ground mist all around the coast—or was it a smoke screen? The observer could not decide, possibly both. A pity Marshal Sonnenbrunn did not change his dispositions—but the Germans being what they are, that is one of the things they dislike. And so the night passed—the very night when in faraway peaceful London Igor attended the conference in "Unity House"—and as morning came, the morning when Igor tried to whip up resistance against the Admiral, it was zero hour in Port Sol.

At the first light of day, when Marshal Sonnenbrunn's Air Fleet sailed over the jetties of Port Sol, they were met with a withering A.A. barrage from the whole Fleet—and that Fleet lay outside the harbour. The Admiral directed the action from the bridge of *Duchess Viola* which proudly flew his flag, and the observers of the Heinkel Squadron sent to bomb the Fleet in the harbour perceived only empty basins.

The place was so empty that it seemed incredible, even the tugs were gone and the biggest craft of Port Sol was a deserted rowing boat, floating in a melancholy way in the middle of the main-channel.

Too late did Marshal Sonnenbrunn remember the two squadrons of torpedo-carriers which were stationed in Zaraga. Still, his dive-bombers went into play and a direct hit was scored on the *St. Dmitri*, one of the cruisers of the *Orsino* class.

With several of his ships damaged and the cruiser *St. Dmitri* in a sinking condition, Admiral Antonio was anxious for an air umbrella. That arrived just in time, in the form of British and American aircraft from the Middle East which had been held in readiness for this possibility; the Admiral had been clever and had notified the British and the Americans two days before, in order to get away as many ships as possible. He had succeeded in this, and before the morning was over his efficient fleet sailed quietly across the Mediterranean to Alexandria.

These facts were at that time unknown to Igor, as indeed even to Captain Valentine to whom Igor hurried when the extra editions were issued in the London streets; he did not know more than that Antonio had radioed an order to all ships to run immediately for the nearest Allied port. The news about the naval battle came by hand from the Admiralty, who were asking for guidance on the political aspects of the whole coup.

Valentine was as excited as a little boy at the incredible courage of that condottiere, but on the other hand he seemed worried about the political implications. Igor knew that his personal ambitions were high and that Antonio's arrival would mean the end of Valentine's career, except maybe under Antonio's command. Even that was questionable, if one considered the Admiral's background and the clique of faithful officers whom he had succeeded in building around himself.

With confusing dispatches buzzing in their ears, the members of the National Committee assembled for an emergency meeting, called—in case they did not know the news already—by Zolot, Valentine's departmental chief. Almost everybody was present before noon, when the detailed reports arrived, excepting the Duke himself. Zolot telephoned like mad all over the place, but there wasn't the slightest trace of His Highness.

The Duchess raged and every ten minutes her voice boomed over the wire to ask whether he had yet arrived; he had not slept at home, but that was nothing out of the ordinary, as he disliked driving in the blackout so much that very often he stayed where he was for the night. The butler at the "Grange" in Sevenoaks hadn't seen him either.

As it seemed impossible to start the Emergency Meeting of the Committee without the chairman, they waited, passing the time with speculations about the news which was coming in every few seconds. Malvolio seemed disinterested and sat at his place at the desk, drumming with his fingers a melody which he was hearing in his mind.

At last the Duke arrived, just before lunch. By that time everybody was hungry and their spirits were not very high. But the state His Highness was in! There were three scratches running down his cheek and the left eye had a distinct yellow-greenish tinge as if after somebody's 'right-hook.'

Yes, it had been Peggy Mills, whom the Duke had told that he was to break off their relations. Peggy Mills, the famous star, was the daughter of a greengrocer from Macclesfield, and the family had a famous fighting tradition. The Lancashire gals are famous for their strong personality and ambition, and Peggy was a shining example.

God knows what the poor girl imagined when the liaison began; possibly she thought of becoming in the long run Duchess of Illyria, or possibly she just saw the perspective of glory à la Nell Gwynn. Possibly also the pearl necklace with which the Duke tried to sweeten the farewell was not expensive enough and the actress' pride was hurt by the sudden move; maybe it was the outcome of all these components combined. In any case, here was the result, perfectly visible to anyone, not to speak of a scandal which was threatening to disrupt to prospects of the pending political marriage. The Duke had tried to cover up the damage with powder, but matters were only made worse by this attempt.

Well, there they were, that fateful morning, with messages pouring in, and great decisions to be taken. The Foreign Office was asking for guidance; how was the Admiral to be treated? Was he an Ally? Did the Committee consider him a friend of the Allied cause? Naïve question, that, thought Igor. What will be the attitude of the Duke's provisional administration?

There were also congratulatory telegrams, pouring in at an alarming rate; Lord Easterfield and Mr. Woodrow C. Macconochie congratulated the Duke on his splendid diplomacy. Viscount So-and-So—the man who proposed the toast at the engagement—hoped he would be able to bring a toast to the new and splendid Ally.

On the Stock Exchange all papers were going up and the City was most optimistic. Sir Andrew beamed. Possibly Northwick had bought in time and this time there was no repetition of the financial disaster threatening him last autumn. Sir Toby felt exhilarated; he

had forecast rightly and now he hoped that his career would move a step beyond that of the keeper of Anglo-Illyrian friendship, which in the long run was rather boring, though socially not without use. General Curio kept looking towards Igor and then towards the Duke. Evidently he was bewildered by the politicians as usual. Blast these politicians, blast them three times over.

"Gentlemen," said the Duke slowly, his right hand hesitating between the fold of his jacket and the scratched cheek, "I am opening this meeting in a grave moment of emergency. . . . Excuse me, please." A messenger had slipped in, bringing what seemed to be an urgent message. The Duke read it with evident relief; it didn't take more than two minutes.

Everybody craned their necks trying to see what the message was about when the Duke handed it over to Sir Andrew to read. It was from Admiral Antonio, a radiogram sent from aboard the *Duchess Viola*, pledging allegiance to the Duke 'as the legal Sovereign,' assuring him of the good Admiral's loyalty.

"We are prepared to fight under your command," ended the telegram, "to the last drop of blood for the liberation of our country from the invaders." Sir Andrew raised his voice as he read this last line, and everybody began to cheer. What a historic moment!

With Admiral Antonio's adherence, the Committee would acquire with one stroke a beautiful fleet and thus it could join the rest of the Allies as equal partner. The Duke felt relieved for the moment, yet somehow he felt that there was a catch somewhere. His vanity was pleased by being addressed as Commander-in-Chief, but he had seen enough of politics to know that the Admiral's arrival would represent considerable trouble. As if there wasn't trouble enough already, with all these dealings with General Lehman and that firebrand of a Duval. There were a lot of problems to be solved and now this great complication. . . . Yes. But a fleet, and almost intact. Not to speak of nearly the whole Merchant Navy under Antonio's command. The Duke joined in the cheering, clapping his small hands with the relief of a child.

The only one who did not cheer was Igor. Looking at these gay faces he thought in a lightning flashback of all the things that had happened since his arrival in England. This then was the end, and though he had fought well, the battle seemed completely lost.

What to do? Let us wait. We shall not quit our position until everything is shambles.

Silence! Sir Toby asks for silence: "May I suggest to Your Highness that a message be despatched at once asking Admiral

Antonio to come to London to clear up all pending questions? Surely the Admiral will play a part important enough to suggest immediate action. Otherwise we might be facing misunderstandings not dissimilar to those of our French Allies." Who will second the motion? Ah, Malvolio. The little Buddha lifts his hand and the soft, dry voice says, "I do." Motion carried.

Now to the message itself. The secretary, Mr. Matties, is taking it down. An invitation to London. That means an invitation to the Committee itself. Being what he is, the Admiral will not accept anything less than the post of Prime Minister if and when the Government is formed—as surely it will now, before long. This means that the Committee is accepting him *de facto* already into its ranks. This telegram must be stopped.

Igor is getting up. His face is white, but his thoughts are collected as ever. His voice booms through the huge room like a storm-wind. "I protest against this message!" Igor shouts. "In the name of the Illyrian people, I protest against all pacts with traitors! For that is what Admiral Antonio is. Not so long ago I was walking through the streets of Oliville. You should have heard what they think of Antonio there. And now . . . does the Committee not realise that the shame of this deal will fall upon each member of this body?"

"You can resign, if you are worried about that," whispers Sir Andrew as audibly as possible, but Igor is not perturbed: "Antonio played with the Germans as long as he could. He benefited from the disaster as long as he could. Now he thinks that the Germans will lose, and again he wants to be on the winning side. What does this message of loyalty mean? Didn't he prove a thousand times that he was an enemy of democracy? Didn't he permit the Gestapo to work under his 'neutrality'? Didn't he supply the Germans for a long time? Surely the right course would be to bring the fleet to Alexandria, arrest the Admiral, clean the ships of all Fascist elements—and if this should prove too difficult, lend-lease them to the British or the United States. Anything else will be nothing but betrayal of the Illyrian people whose name this Committee purports to represent."

Igor sat down, and there was a silence for a while. Sir Andrew was the first to recover his wits: "I am sorry, Duval, but I think you are mad." He lit a cigarette: "You just talk of 'arresting the Admiral,' as if this was the simplest task in the world. First of all, the Admiral went over to the side of the Allies with his entire force. If anything of that kind were attempted, the fleet would be scuttled, and I wonder what the British would say to that. Also there are powerful forces on the Continent which will be made to think by

the Admiral's courageous deed. Besides, the Admiral was always strictly non-political."

"Hear, hear," shouted Sir Toby.

"Not only military, but also political expediency commands," continued Sir Andrew, shaking himself in his immaculately fitting suit, "that the Admiral's generous offer of collaboration be accepted immediately. May I move that Mr. Duval's protest be disregarded and the message despatched at once."

"And what about public opinion?" shouted Igor, but Malvolio looked at him with his lidless eyes: "You ought to know about public opinion. There is no such thing. Sir Toby, over there, is our public opinion."

Sir Toby accepted the compliment with an independent air. Since he had taken over his new tasks, he was much less sensitive to the financier's slashing remarks and his cheque book.

"Will Your Highness kindly sign the message?" said Sir Andrew, while Cromin and Cardinal Révy had a quick exchange of views about further signatures.

"May I move that my own signature be attached to the message?" asked Cromin after the Duke had signed. "As the leader of one of the strongest parties of our former Government I assume that the honour of countersigning will be permitted."

Now they will have a scramble as to who is going to be the first to lick Antonio's boots, thought Igor. What a combination; Antonio in line and General Lehman as War Minister. What better combination could they get? Only I believe that 'Papa' will refuse. He must refuse—the repercussions within Illyria would be terrible.

But still, God knows what he will do when they offer him arms on that condition only; possibly he will do that; one doesn't know the situation from here and the monitoring reports do not contain the more secret discussions. I must try to-night to get in touch with 'Papa' himself to prevent this catastrophe.

Now the message is signed, but even if the journey is by plane it will take Antonio two to three days to get to London. God how tired I am, I did not sleep last night. Now the Committee settle down to business, many of the urgent points must be discussed.

But here, Cromin gets up, pulls out of his pocket a memorandum, points to Igor: "May I suggest that Mr. Duval be excluded from discussions of this meeting to-day? I have here a report about his indiscretions, which are a heavy breach of discipline, such as are indeed unheard of, and which I did not wish to believe until I heard Mr. Duval speak a few minutes ago?"

See, how everybody looks; just what they wanted. Only in General Curio's face there is a bewildered look and the Duke's mouth twitches nervously. What a muddle, thinks he, what complications on top of my row with Peggy. And Mama at home. Poor me.

Cromin reads a detailed report about Igor's discussions in "Unity House." It is more like a stenographer's report, interrupted by the Cardinal's grunting and the occasional "Hear, hear" of Sir Toby. Sir Andrew smiles a nasty smile and Malvolio listens without expression. In a way he has a kind of pity for that idealist of a journalist. However, this is not important—it's all in the game, and there is no room for sentimentality here.

When Cromin finished reading, there was a moment of silence. The Cardinal fingered his cloak and pulled out a heavy watch. "I think that we should break off here, to cut short this painful episode," he said in his nasal voice. "And I hope that Mr. Duval will exclude himself voluntarily from this afternoon's session so that we can go on with the business. I suggest that we deal with his case at our regular meeting to-morrow morning." Yes, we have done a good morning's work, now let us break off.

There is a loud rumbling in Sir Toby's tummy, clearly audible even to outsiders; it is past three and there has been no lunch. Sir Toby doesn't even look at Igor, nor does Cromin or anybody else except General Curio and Valentine; Curio has a rather wistful air, he feels sorry and impotent. This man was our Commander-in-Chief, no wonder we fared so badly, thinks Igor. Captain Valentine has his partisan interests which do not exclude sympathy for Igor, who walks out into the sunny street.

Two little boys are playing marbles as if nothing had happened. Look at this street in England, thought Igor, far away from all the fields of battle; it is incredible but it is true, for them everything is only a spectacle enacted on the bloody stage of the world.

What actors they have got!

Heroes, scoundrels, traitors. Hamlets, Antonys, Ophelias, Shylocks in dozens, but they don't mind. This nation goes about its own business without stirring, without imagination. This is why they are so strong. Look, two children are playing marbles while a giant betrayal in the history of my country is being enacted; and look opposite, four men have a discussion over their afternoon papers, headlines shout "Naval Battle off Port Sol," but let us bet that these workers are discussing their chances in the football pool.

What did Ponsonby say? That there is no such thing as an inde-

pendent newspaper, every paper is dependent on something or somebody; and Malvolio remarked "Sir Toby, over there, is our public opinion." But that cannot be, we cannot believe that human beings can be so gullible. What was it Lincoln said? "You can fool all the people some of the time, some people all the time. But you cannot succeed in fooling all the people all the time."

That was Mr. Wainwright's idea, he believed in his people as I believe in mine. After all, this is by no means an internal Illyrian matter, this precedent shows the pattern of things to come. Surely there will be powerful allies to be found. We will see whether Mr. Wainwright can help us here. He will have to.

Now let us hurry home; there, a paper. The *Megaphone*; Easterfield is pushing Antonio into the forefront, with a photograph and two columns on the front-page. They work quickly. How long will it take before Antonio arrives? Two, three days at least. Not much time. Taxi!

When Igor arrived home, there was a white card on the table in the hall with a line on it: "Sorry I was late—M."

Too late indeed, lassie, but we cannot stop to think, now. Once Antonio is in London, his position will be difficult to shake; just possible that it is too late already, by this time he will have met all the big-wigs in Cairo. Wonder who gave that detailed report about our meeting? That would be probably Feste, he collects material about everything and everybody. Especially myself. It will be a difficult stand, but stand we will. There will be a row when Antonio comes. I am determined to make it, even if Mr. James. A. Carr, U.S. resident in Cairo, finds it expedient to stand by the Admiral, who has the gift of winning everybody's heart; but I cannot believe that he really could get away with it.

Now let us buy another paper; bang, there is a new photograph in it and an interview—Antonio is in Alexandria already. He arrived by seaplane, probably catapulted from the *Duchess Viola*. A short interview, he is certainly getting on pretty well with the reporters; he always did, in his direct and jovial way. Did Antonio object to the U.S.S.R.? That was one of the questions fired at him before the war. "Not exactly object," said he, "as far as I am concerned. The trouble is that they are objectionable." How everybody laughed! Yes, Antonio is a brigand and brigands know how to capture public imagination starved of romanticism.

That night, when Igor arrived by train at the monitoring station, the sentry at the gate did not let him in. His papers, the head-porter

said, were invalid and by order of the Ministry of Defence anybody coming in had to have a special permit.

Igor returned to town, in impotent rage. In a taxi he went to the Ministry of Defence, but there was nobody who could help him. By telephone he found out that Brigadier Nelson-Alresford, his one time partner and adversary, was in the National Conservative Club.

Igor took a taxi and slipped into the Club. The Brigadier was there and he was sorry that Igor had come so late. He was unable to help him, because Brigadier Templeton who was in charge of Intelligence Signals was out of town. No, he couldn't do anything at all. "You know," the Brigadier said, "we British can't help trusting people. That's the way we are running things. How the dickens could we guess who is right and who is wrong, except by placing our trust in somebody from that country and giving him a free hand until we find that he is playing his own game? I guess these extraordinary steps were taken because of that fellow Antonio. Amazing story, isn't it?"

Igor agreed; that was the way they all looked at it. The British were happy to acquire the temporary advantage of the ships. The naval situation in the Mediterranean was eased, true. But the long range results . . . those they did not precisely understand.

The Brigadier asked several questions. He was an intelligent man and he had been abroad for the major part of his professional life; he saw only the balance of power and he was pleased. Everything else was for him merely civil strife which he could not grasp. Igor left him greatly depressed and dropped in to Dr. Bruyl's. After their walk back through the night and the old man's story, Igor felt great trust in this quiet philosopher.

Bruyl asked him to come and have some coffee. "My Magdalen makes excellent coffee in her percolator," he said. "What, you look as if you had had no dinner. All right, we'll feed you."

They fed him, and while eating Igor explained his experience to Bruyl, who had more news on several points than Igor. His eyes looked cheerfully through the black-rimmed pince-nez. "No porridge is eaten as hot as they cook it," he smiled. "I think that what you need most is sleep. To-morrow morning you can check the papers. You will see that there will be considerable criticism. Even if the big-wigs are happy, there will be many voices against Antonio. You must not panic, my boy. After our gentlemen have read the papers, they will be much tamer at to-morrow's meeting. Quite natural that they try to stop you communicating with General Lehman. Why, that would spoil the game. No, no haste now, and

to-morrow there must be no rash steps. You will see that they will not dare to expel you from the Committee unless you yourself resign. And that is exactly what they want.

"I am sure that you will not oblige them. Resignation is the last, irrevocable step. You must always think of the men who sent you here, what they expect and what they would do. I would resign only if it is utterly impossible to get on, or if your resignation would ease the arms situation of General Lehman."

Igor didn't always agree with Dr. Bruyl, but to-night his own judgement seemed obscured; the old man seemed wise with the perspective of his age, which overlooked decades as a mountaineer does glaciers and gorges. Bruyl clearly saw beyond the immediate troubles and his quiet optimism revived Igor's faith again; perhaps Mrs. Bruyl's coffee and cake did a lot in that direction, too. They put him up on a couch in the living room and he slept so deeply that even a short, sharp air-raid did not wake him up.

In the meantime Admiral Antonio was the guest of honour on board the *Lord Beaconsfield*, Admiral Lowther's Flagship of the Eastern Mediterranean Fleet. Admiral Lowther made this gesture after obtaining guidance from London, but it was clear to him that his attitude to this arriving buccaneer could not be anything but friendly. Still, he put on a slightly freezing starchiness, which is usually worn by British soldiers and sailors of high rank when meeting foreign colleagues.

But he did not reckon with the visitor; within ten minutes the guest had taken everybody's heart by storm; his roguish charm overcame all barriers and the company shook with laughter at his juicy remarks.

When the Hon. Mrs. Carr, wife of the American President, pulled his leg gently about a mispronounced word in English, he laughed with the rest of the company until the iced sherry overflowed his glass. Said he: "I have been troubled long enough about my German. Why should I trouble about my English?" Which summed up his attitude beautifully.

Yet when they sat down to dinner, Antonio pronounced, in very good English, a toast in honour of the King of England and the President of the United States, which got both the British and the United States representatives into great trouble. After all, they had to reply with a similar toast to the Illyrian ruler and the point was that there was no such person, Duke Orsino being only a private personality presiding over the National Committee. However, better

an abdicated Duke than none, and so, as there was no one better, up went the toasts to his health.

Whether all this was a clever gesture of the cunning Admiral, or whether it had happened merely by chance, was difficult to gauge; but the fact was immediately commented upon and was promptly telegraphed to London to appear in the morning edition of the papers: "British and U.S. Ministers toasting Duke Orsino."

It was reported, too, that the Admiral retired very early because of the air-journey before him, that he appeared to be in excellent spirits, and that he had offered to hang von Zinzel on the mast of his flagship, head downwards, when the war was won.

The photographs showed his huge bulk in the white uniform with glittering gold-stars and the rows of medals with a huge Croix-de-Guerre on top. The ribbon of his German 'Pour-le-mérite' order was still on his tunic and he did not want to take it off. As he commented to Mr. Hughes, Reuter Correspondent in Cairo: "The German 'Pour-le-mérite' order is given to those who merit it. Didn't I do my best to merit it?" which, in his charmingly cynical way, he accompanied with a deep burst of laughter.

The Duchess was skimming through all these little comments and episodes in the large array of papers which she had had brought to her bed by her faithful Maria. She looked years younger, and in her night-gown, with beautiful laces protruding from under the blanket, almost coquettish. So her dream was going to be fulfilled.

If one thought of the misery one had gone through since the fall of Illyria, this sudden outburst of sunshine felt doubly agreeable. Yes, God had granted the requests which the Duchess so often addressed to him in her prayers: her family was to be a ruling family again, powerful allies had risen from everywhere and now there was even a fleet at their disposal.

Now with Admiral Antonio calling the Duke his Sovereign, his recognition could no longer be delayed and soon the House of Orsino would be where it belonged by its historic merits. Possibly also it would get even further, if history was to run the proper way, bringing order and prosperity and Christian morale to people who were subjected to continuous troubles and wars, and whose soul had so often suffered through Bolshevik ailments.

On the family front things were not so bad: little Edith was to be engaged to the Hon. Master John Langdon at the end of his term, while Cecilia was on very good terms with the Duke of Kinlochleven, the owner of three-quarters of Scotland.

The trouble was only with Marguerite and Rudolph. What a letter

that little actress wrote! When the Duchess thought of that letter, her face turned crimson. Blackmail, and at a moment like this; a threat to "scratch that woman's eyes out." Poor Duchess of Sydenham with her rattling bones, that would be just about her death. She would not survive such a scandal.

The Duchess braced herself for a meeting with Miss Mills, which was to take place this afternoon at Bendinck's in Bond Street. Yes, a settlement must be made at any cost. I knew that Rudolph would fare badly, thought the Duchess, he has no discretion. When his father had that affair with the ballerina of the Ducal Ballet in Oliville, he . . . never mind.

The other trouble is the girl Marguerite. One does not take her threat of staying where she is against the will of her family seriously, but she is a stubborn girl. We will have to curb her at all costs. I didn't like that flirtation of hers with that nihilist Duval; he is a revolutionary, but thank God, now his backbone has been broken.

The Cardinal said that there is no danger of that man doing any serious damage, though it will be necessary to leave him for a few days longer on the Committee, until the time is ripe to form the Government, and Rudolph is recognised. To expel him would prejudice the negotiations with Lehman, and the English would regard such a step very queerly—especially with the Liberal and Left papers writing rather suspicious leaders about the Admiral.

Time will tell; if Marguerite will not be persuaded to return, perhaps the best thing for her would be to stay at Oxford; out of kindness of heart she would certainly get in touch with Duval, which would not do at all. Yes, just a few more days until everything is solved. I will go as high as five hundred pounds if the Mills woman hands over the letters which that idiot of Rudolph wrote to her. Unless we could pretend that "Monti" is another person. We shall see.

With Lord Easterfield's papers having divided opinions about the Admiral, the wind blew slightly less favourably towards Illyrian consolidation than it seemed to do the day before. Easterfield followed his old tactics; personally he was, of course, in favour of Antonio, who brought with him so many nice ships, many of them belonging to the Adriatic-Aegean's modern fleet. With Lend-Lease it was clear that at the end of the war Illyrian shipping would be in a powerful position and all in all it was worth the investment. Still, one never knew, and the pink wing of the Easterfield Press was there to present

his Lordship with a back-door or a means of strong pressure should the situation get out of hand.

The *Labour Chronicle*, together with *Liberal Herald*, was clearly against Antonio, and it seemed that it would be unwise to attempt to muffle their opinion by force; Malvolio was against any such attempts as he hated crude means in general.

At the moment the I.A.T. backed Lork Easterfield as fully as ever, and Sir Andrew was advising caution. Otherwise Antonio would change into a Frankenstein who by force of his dominant position would do whatever he wanted with the Committee.

No, Sir Andrew thought, Duval must not be expelled from the Committee, at least not until he has done his job. Let us wait until Antonio comes to London, Duval's head will be an excellent bargaining point.

Cromin, whom Sir Andrew met before going to the morning's meeting, had the same notion. Let Duval run his head against the windmills, there will be time enough for it to be broken, nor will occasions be wanting; it would be a pity to chuck out such a voluntary breakwater as this fool will be.

These were the reasons why the meeting of the Illyrian National Committee was much less stormy than Igor had expected. Before his departure from Dr. Bruyl's he had a telephone call from Mr. Wainwright.

Wainwright was reassuring in his own way. There was considerable opposition in the House of Commons, though not sufficiently strong to force the issue; but what was more hopeful, according to Mr. Wainwright, was the number of letters and resolutions pouring in to the various M.P.s and the editors of the Press. He would meet Igor in the evening, at Bruyl's and there further methods would be discussed.

But the immediate issues before Igor were two-fold: first, Cromin's attack because of his attending the "Unity House" meeting; second, his being prevented from communicating with General Lehman. But in these two points the Committee was united in not wanting it to come to a showdown. Cardinal Révy thought that it would be foolish to start internal strife at a moment when the situation was not yet clear and great changes were pending. As for the second question, which Igor had directed to Curio, the poor man was in serious trouble.

How could he tell Igor that he had dropped entirely all command over communications in order to be better able to run his beloved

Illyrian Brigade? In reality, of course, the facts were that the communication was gently wrested out of his hands by certain members of the Committee and now entrusted officially to Colonel Feste, a person much less apt to feel pangs of conscience than the rather old-fashioned soldier.

Cromin was at the back of it, and it was Cromin, too, who got up and with his monkish manner pointed out that communications with Illyria were not to be considered as a personal affair and that by surrendering the codes to the Committee, to which they should have been surrendered in the first instance, Igor had only done his duty; he had done it rather late, but the Committee overlooked this in view of the circumstances. But now, pending re-organisation, the Committee was of the opinion that any private communications would be inadvisable and the British Government had been notified accordingly.

His little eyes were as gentle as ever as he made this bitter harangue, but his mouth had a nasty twist. Igor noticed that he had a broken tooth which gave his whole face an appearance of strange indecency. Yes, there was nothing to be done except resign; Bruyl was right, that course could be taken only when his presence here was utterly without use—and from the attitude of the various members this morning he saw that they still did not dare to break off relations immediately.

When he went away, he greeted Curio, who turned his face away. "Why, General," said Igor, "you need not have any trouble in looking into my eyes. I understand. It was Feste, wasn't it?"

Curio was ill at ease, he fingered the buttons of his uniform. At last he burst out: "Yes, Feste. But look here, Duval, I think that you are going the wrong way about it and that your mass-meetings and such business cannot but damage our case here. The English have been so helpful lately. . . . They are going to lease-lend us material to equip our Brigade here, and they have promised to send more supplies to Lehman when he becomes War Minister in the Government to be set up."

Lehman had been retreating lately, there were plenty of Hungarians against him and the Germans were using dive-bombers for a change. The important town of Tarin had been lost. That was bad news, and Curio felt justified in his attitude.

He did not understand that they wanted to use the momentary distress of the partisan armies to blackmail 'Papa' into accepting the consolidation. If Lehman accepted a seat in a Government which had Antonio in a dominant position—as it was bound to have—this

would be a catastrophe with repercussions far beyond Illyrian frontiers.

Let us hope, let us believe that he will not. And do not let us try to explain the situation to this naive soldier, thought Igor. He sees only his private little army instead of the complicated political pattern, and enjoys playing soldiers. Good-bye, my Curio. Unfortunately honesty is not enough these days.

"Things are going well," said Mr. Wainwright, between two sandwiches. "Some more of that coffee. God, am I hungry."

"You English are such optimists," smiled Igor, in rather a sceptical mood. "We are," said Mr. Wainwright, munching the next sandwich, "and so far we haven't regretted it. Cheer up, my lad, things are going better than I thought."

Seeing the question in Igor's face, Wainwright told him what was happening. Practically the whole of the Trade Unions had been sending resolutions; three big aircraft factories were lobbying their M.P.'s this morning; and then in the pub where he had a drink at lunch time, people spoke of nothing but Antonio. "But they are still confused," Wainwright concluded. "Still, at the meeting in Hyde Park in three days' time, I am sure we will have a record attendance."

While he was talking, Bruyl had slipped in like a silent shadow: "With three Trade Union Speakers, four M.P.'s of several parties, that should be quite an impressive gathering."

"You too?" asked Igor and Dr. Bruyl asked back: "What do you mean by this question?"

Igor tilted his head: "Since when have you been a partisan of mass meetings? Do they ever change anything?"

Bruyl was serious: "I never said they would. But I am a democrat. I believe in the common people having the right and the duty to express their opinions. Or else they bear the responsibility for not doing so. And such a meeting will have a certain effect—in a democracy, I mean—and besides it will be a good bit of education for those who come."

"You still do not believe?" asked Wainwright, as Igor was hiding his face behind a cup of coffee. He put it down.

"I have told you once, already," he said, "when I see Mrs. Clapson, Bruyl's landlady, demonstrating in Whitehall, I'll believe you."

They called in Mrs. Clapson, just to have a cup of coffee with them. "Well, Mrs. Clapson," said Mr. Wainwright, "surely you are going to come to the meeting in Hyde Park."

Mrs. Clapson opened her blue eyes wide: "What meeting?"

Igor smiled, while Mr. Wainwright explained. It took some time, but finally he got through.

"Well, what do you think now?" asked Dr. Bruyl gently, as was his way. Mrs. Clapson turned to him and said: "It is ever so confusing, Sir, ever so much. I am a simple housewife, and you know how I live. I haven't ever had anything to do with politics, and I am ever so old, Sir. But if Mrs. Bruyl wants to have the new bed-cover, I have borrowed a nice blue one from my step-cousin who has been called up in Liverpool. Now my step-cousin's wife. . ."

Dr. Bruyl ushered her gently out.

There was a silence for a moment.

"There you are," Igor said.

Mr. Wainwright looked up. "You just wait. We need time."

CHAPTER XII

THE ROPE ON WHICH A MAN IS HUNG

It so happened that Admiral Antonio's arrival coincided with the great protest meeting in London. His plane had been delayed by a German attack on several air-liners, one of which was shot down in the Bay of Biscay; it was suspected that this sudden outburst was due to the Germans trying to get the Admiral.

Not that Antonio was frightened. He had disliked the compulsory stop in West Africa and had in vain tried to persuade the authorities to let him go by special plane.

"Probably von Zinzel heard about my offer to hang him by his feet when I get him," he explained to a reporter afterwards, "and he wanted to express his personal thanks to me."

The timing of the arrival was admirable—or that of the meeting. Just at the moment when Mr. Wainwright was calling out from the platform in Hyde Park that Britain would never return to the policy of appeasing her enemies and their allies, the Admiral's huge car was slipping into the outskirts of London.

When it had entered the town area proper, Mr. Douglas Melville, M.P. for Pilchester, was assuring the Illyrian people, and with them the other peoples of Europe, that the British people would see to it that the terms of the Atlantic Charter would be implicitly fulfilled.

At the moment when Dr. Bruyl took the stand for the famous "Friends and Allies" speech, quoted later in the press, Admiral Antonio was passing Marble Arch.

Seeing the huge crowd and the Illyrian flags waving in the wind, the Admiral asked Valentine, who had gone to pick him up, what kind of a meeting this was. When he was told the truth, the Admiral was greatly amused: "So much trouble because of my poor self," he laughed, "but I am glad to see that the British are at least interested in our problems."

His arrival at the quiet house at St. James's Square was covered widely by the Press, who had turned up in large numbers. Later on it became known at the "George and the Dragon" in Shoe Lane that Sir Toby Belch had promised this event as an exclusive scoop to no less than seventeen papers at once.

When the Duke received him at the doorstep, the Admiral lowered his huge body as if he wanted to kneel down before his Sovereign, but the Duke raised him quickly, much to the amusement of the Press.

The Admiral looked healthy and strong in his white uniform and his face shone with sweat and goodwill. When entering the hall, Antonio was met by the old Duchess, in the loveliest of her black dresses, her white hair like a crown over her flashing eyes. He kissed her hand and bowed deeply and the photographers were delighted. With a smile he greeted their efforts, and the Press stayed outside expecting further developments.

At the same time, Igor was at the platform giving his famous "Antonio must go" speech, a speech that was later to figure so prominently at his trial. In spite of the emotional strain of the last few days, Igor seemed in excellent speaking form and the issue at stake made his faulty English nevertheless convincing. His statement carried great weight, especially as it was announced that he was a member of the Illyrian National Committee, and to Vincent Carroll, of the *London Gazette*, who had just seen the arrival of the Admiral, this circumstance seemed not without piquancy.

The meeting was very successful; there were several thousand people there. Igor quoted in his speech messages which he had obtained from all over the country, all to the effect that the British people would stand by Illyria until its liberation, and that the free will of the Illyrian people would be respected.

Antonio, who had treated with the Germans, who helped them as long as it was convenient to him, together with all quislings, must

go! This was the content of his speech, and old Nemir, who had been picking his teeth with a self-made tooth-pick, congratulated him warmly—though not without second thoughts. Didn't they call him once upon a time "Father of Illyrian Labour"? Pity that this meeting was not in Oliville, he would have shown them. . . but in Illyrian, not in English.

The meeting when on, but Igor was called away: a message came from the Chancellery that he was to come for a extraordinary meeting of the Committee. That could mean only one thing, that Antonio had arrived.

Leaving therefore only the remaining two speakers on the platform, Igor, Dr. Bruyl, Nemir and Bratiu retired quickly to "Unity House" to discuss what was to be done.

Fabian, who had not come to the mass meeting, met them with a sour smile. The man's face had become yellow lately, the eyes falling deeply under the high forehead. Fabian was ill and tired, but his ambitions were as high as ever, though the chance of satisfying them was as yet remote. How he hated Igor! In a flash there suddenly dawned in Igor's mind who was the "responsible" politician who had given the report to Cromin. Who else but Fabian? But that was hardly credible, and one had no right to believe such suspicions and instincts until they had some more concrete foundations.

"Things are moving quickly, eh, brothers?" said Fabian. "Your policy of collaboration is bearing fruit, Mr. Duval. Thanks to you the Illyrian people are in a terrible mess. You should have waited until now—because now they would have come to you, crawling for your conditions. How could they form a Government without Labour? They never could, ha ha. Not with the British situation as it is to-day. Not with Russia in this war. But you were with them from the beginning—and this is where you have landed. Well, I can bide my time."

He retired into his office, while Igor looked after him with bewilderment. And there, too, was Dr. Vitel. Poor Dr. Vitel, who had cut his hand in the aircraft factory where he was working and had two days off.

Vitel, too, was looking in the direction of Fabian's retreat before turning to Igor: "Terrible news. I hear that Antonio is in London."

Igor did not feel much like talking to this man, who was somehow soft and helpless like a piece of jelly; besides, there was an urgent meeting to attend.

"I often wondered why no Jew or Pole or Frenchman ever killed Hitler," continued Vitel in a voice that made Igor look up. Come, come, there is no time now to explain now why political murders are futile.

"I do not think that would help matters," Igor said eyeing the thin man with suspicion. What was he driving at? By killing Hitler you would make him a martyr, a present for the Nazis; no, let the Germans hang him themselves if and when they feel like it. Besides, there are reprisals to be faced.

"I still think that Antonio is a menace," said Dr. Vitel gloomily. "A disaster for Illyria."

But stop, we have no time for discussions of this kind; true, Antonio is a disaster for Illyria's cause, but complaining will not solve it.

"Come on, Vitel," said Igor, "don't be so gloomy. If you feel like shooting, join General Curio's army. Sorry, I haven't got any time now, see you to-night."

With these words Igor broke off the conversation and hurried to his conference while the other man shook his head and walked slowly towards the window; if Igor had known what his thoughts were, he would have stayed—but one cannot foresee the future. Perhaps this would have prevented the happenings of the next few hours.

Exactly at four fifty-five—the Admiral liked punctuality with the strictness of a man who had learnt by experience that a split second lost might mean defeat in a battle—the huge car stopped before "Illyrian House" near Gloucester Road, bringing Antonio in time for the meeting of the National Committee which was to start at five.

There were only a few people about, as the Press had been satisfied with to-day's harvest of photographs, and the Londoners, used to meeting their own Prime Minister and Cabinet members in the public streets, were not interested, though the Admiral's white uniform, adorned by countless medals and gold stars, certainly could not fail to attract attention.

It was a sunny afternoon, with a hawker selling tulips on the street corner and a small queue of people just forming before the news-vendor in order to get the afternoon papers. A melancholy tune of the last war was being played in a side street on a beggar's piano and the scene resembled a cameo out of a documentary film trying to persuade neutrals what a peaceful and placid town London-at-war really is.

A few passers-by stopped as the huge body of the Admiral emerged

from the car, preceded by Captain Valentine, and the portly figure of Sir Toby emerged smiling from the door, his red nose shining with all the colours of spring. A handshake once more, and the two plain-clothes policemen, together with the uniformed "Bobby" posted by the Yard in front of "Illyrian House," sighed with relief; the Admiral seemed to be safely delivered at his destination.

While the huge white uniform walked across the pavement and slowly up the steps, the small crowd of onlookers began to disperse. At that moment, when the Admiral had almost entered the door, a thin figure walked past and the shot from the small revolver was drowned in the noise of the car just starting.

The Admiral stopped on the last step and turned round as if something had stung him. There was astonishment in his face, immense astonishment.

While Captain Valentine quickly jumped towards him, the Admiral muttered in an almost inaudible voice a few words sounding like, "I am shot," and suddenly, like a falling tree, the bulk of his body crashed backwards, the arms sprawled like an overstuffed doll thrown away by a child.

The policeman and one of the plain-clothes men jumped to Antonio, while the other detective looked quickly around for the killer.

The street presented a perfectly normal sight; a thin figure walked slowly towards the Underground station, its hands in the pockets of a shabby trenchcoat, and that was all.

Suddenly, quite suddenly, the grey figure started running, running, running.

The detective jumped on the step of the car and shouted at the driver to start the engine; the car jerked forward in a frenzied effort of the engine, police whistles sounded, people began to look round.

Indeed, the scene looked much like a sequence of an American film, with the policeman chasing a gangster, the huge car jumping on its soft tyres around the street corner; the tyres yelled in the high pitch of a skid, the figure in the grey trenchcoat rushed down the steps to the platform of the Metropolitan Railway, past the astonished face of Jim Barclay, the ticket collector.

Not used to such frenzy, Barclay shouted, "Hey, you, where's your ticket?" and as the man did not stop he made an attempt to catch him by the fold of his coat. The hand of the thin figure jerked upwards, the small revolver barked and a bullet missed by an inch the astonished collector who, before he could collect his senses, was

caught in a real hurricane of stampeding people, with the plain-clothes man at their head, rushing past him down the steps.

There, on the almost empty platform, runs the thin figure, its trenchcoat now flapping in the wind; people are looking up; what does this mean?

"Stop that man!" shouts the detective, the thin figure runs to the end of the platform, turns around, his face is grey, eyes dilated, tiny drops of sweat on his forehead, he is panting heavily.

The tiny revolver flashes in the streak of sun falling through the broken glass of the roof, and for a moment there is silence, an unbearable tension. He is cornered, he looks around, a madman, ready to kill.

At that moment the huge red caterpillar of the Metropolitan train rushes into the station, ten seconds later than it should; the small figure jerks his head, left, right, the small revolver flies in a half circle between the rails, and a grey trenchcoat follows almost instantly.

The driver of the train, Fred Morgan, of Southby Road, Wimbledon, tries to brake, too late. The train jerks, skids, stands still.

A woman shrieks, before fainting. A mother holds the head of her child away from the dreadful sight under the train. Tiny drops of blood have sprinkled the platform, the blood of Dr. Vitel, the refugee, the dreamer, the fool.

Exit Dr. Vitel—but there, on the steps of the Illyrian Chancellery, lies the body of Admiral Antonio with the Police Surgeon examining it. In the back of the immaculate white uniform there is now a tiny patch of blood as if a small boy had pricked his finger; it is almost unbelievable that such a small wound could cause death in such a bulk of a body; the Admiral's face still bears that look of astonishment; a star has got loose on his chest and lies, glittering, in the dust.

The sun shines on a lazy afternoon, and from a side street comes the sound of a beggar's piano. Several policemen are urging the crowd to move; Londoners are disciplined and obey the police, and the body of the Admiral is carried inside, propped on a table, and nothing else remains on the steps but two or three drops of blood which had soaked through the cloth of the uniform.

It was this situation which Igor faced when he arrived at "Illyrian House"; he was not very late, but then, everything had happened so quickly, and except for the two or three drops of blood

which had soaked into the dust and six policemen guarding the entrance, the street seemed very much the same.

A woman was buying tulips at the hawker's stand and the news-vendor had sold out and packed up. After a hold-up of fifteen minutes, the line at Gloucester Road Station had been cleared up and life went on as usual.

The change was marked only inside "Illyrian House"; there were groups everywhere and Igor was greeted with a host of inimical and cold gazes. Cromin, who stood in a group with Sir Toby and Malvolio, had not changed his gentle look. Only when he said, "There comes the murderer," his eyes seemed in strange contradiction to that hard, bitter mouth which seemed prepared to bite.

At first Igor did not know what had happened, but soon enough he found out when the door opened and the police surgeon came out, asking whether the van from the mortuary had yet arrived. He also explained the results of the preliminary examination: the bullet had cut the aorta just at the heart and death was instantaneous. But that was merely a minor comment which did not explain anything. Igor caught a glimpse of the body when the white uniform was covered up with blankets before being carried to the van. By that time, the Duke had emerged from his room and his small hands nervously fingered the notes for the speech which he had pulled out of his pocket prior to throwing them away.

A historic speech never to be made—now a funeral oration must be prepared, what a trouble. His voice had the high pitch which signified great excitement. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have decided to hold an emergency meeting. Will you assemble in the hall."

First of all everybody stood up in silence in memory of the dead man. Then a speech was improvised by Sir Toby, full of the flourishes which he loved, calling for the strictest prosecution of the guilty ones, not only of the perpetrators of the crime who had withdrawn themselves from the reach of earthly justice, but also of those whose instigation and influence led to this abominable deed.

By this time it was clear to Igor that there would be an attempt to pin the murder on himself. He tried to defend himself, but his speech was received with icy silence.

Even General Curio presented him now with a blank façade, probably convinced that there was something in the allegation. Captain Valentine was as smug as ever, with his sun-browned face and his broad shoulders. As for Malvolio, there he sat, eyes closed—one did not know whether he was listening or not—seemingly relaxed and yet full of tension. Sir Andrew, more like an otter than usual,

had his arms akimbo and his gaze fixed upon Igor. And Cromin, drawing complicated ornaments on a pad. Yes, there would be no mercy. This was their moment, Igor knew.

But then, such a murder was not to be judged by Illyrian politicians—it must come before a British court. And British justice would decide; the British, whatever their intentions, would certainly be neutral and judge impartially. Let us spare our big guns until then, thought Igor; for anything we say now will be used against us.

When Igor finished, Sir Andrew spoke. He, too, was for the strictest prosecution for the terrible deed. Far be it from him to try to pin the guilt on anybody, but Igor could not deny, he thought, that throughout the time of his being member of this Committee he tried hard to fight against the Admiral—not only politically but also personally. It was understandable that a certain amount of suspicion would be attached to him and he would therefore suggest that Igor suspend his activity in this body until the matter was cleared. Cromin suggested that if Igor refused to do this the Committee should ban his presence at their meetings; "Hear, hear," said Toby and added a *sotto voce* comment that even if the British whitewashed him, no Illyrian would ever believe it to be true.

For Sir Toby, the Duval affair had been closed, ever since he took the Editorship of *Illyrian Freedom*. The time when he was prepared to stake a part of his fortune on the newcomer was gone; it was necessary now to get the newcomer out of the race, he was a dud horse and if kept in his presence might lead to the fall of one of the favourites.

The Duke moved Sir Andrew's motion. It was carried unanimously. The Duke's lips twitched as he got up for the final speech; he was sorry, he said, that the man for whom this Committee had given a guarantee—here Cardinal Révy dropped in "And God will judge him!"—had got involved in such a tragic allegation. He was sorry, too, that a member of this council was under suspicion of so foul a deed—and he thought a temporary resignation would be the best course advisable.

As the case stood, however, there was only one course possible for him—to suspend Igor Duval from further meetings of this Committee. While he was finishing, Igor tried to find the man's gaze and look into his eyes. The Duke, however, seemed to feel extremely uneasy. All this excitement was bad for his nerves. First the scandal with Peggy Mills, now this murder, where would it end?

As far as this man Duval was concerned, possibly the accusation went too far; he was a firebrand, but not a murderer; if one took

into account his subversive activity during the last six weeks, certainly at least moral responsibility—or even direct instigation to the crime—was quite possible. In any case, mused the Duke, the man was a bother and I know why I hesitated before giving my guarantee for his release. Pity he didn't have the decency to resign himself. These proceedings are always very painful. Yes, now the matter will be investigated by the British. May God grant that little is said about our matters. Least said, soonest mended.

Three weeks later, on a sunny afternoon, two men sat in the smoking room of Sir James' Club—the National Conservative. The light fell through the large windows, painting squares and checks upon the Persian rugs. Two bishops were talking to each other about the progressive increase of Sin as the war-years passed, calling each other by the names of their dioceses. The Minister of Transport sat sprawled in the easy chair by the fire-place, his newspaper fallen on his knees from his sleeping hand.

Sir James was filling his pipe from his pouch, while Malvolio's eyes seemingly looked nowhere. At last Sir James put the pipe between his porcelain teeth and applied the match: "So the proceedings were stopped?"

Malvolio nodded. His eyes closed like that of a child's doll saying Mama, when the head is moved. "That was to be expected," he said, "I never thought that Duval had any hand in it. . . . However, that deed of the poor fool—what was his name, Dr. Vitel or something—provided the rope with which Duval could hang himself. Pity about him, he is a good brain, but a fool."

Sir James threw away the match and smiled: "You seem to be in a benevolent mood these days," he remarked. "Are the negotiations going on so well?"

And as Malvolio did not hurry with the reply, he continued: "Captain Robertson-Bragg told me that the recognition will be completed within four weeks. Is that because of the Fleet. . .?"

Malvolio smiled, too. They knew each other, these two, old partners both. No use making poker faces: "I think that the British F.O. was greatly relieved at the news. Not that they condone such nasty episodes. But the late Admiral was a tough customer, as they say in America. Difficult partner to deal with."

"Difficult partner for the Duke, you mean to say?" joked Sir James, clicking his porcelain teeth. The *Maréchal Niels* have not been harmed after all, he reflected, they are going to blossom at the beginning of next week at the latest. "Antonio would have become

Duke of Illyria himself in the long run. I am sure Easterfield was scared out of his wits when Antonio came to London so quickly." The anemones in the hothouse looked heavenly, one wished one could sit there the whole day instead of talking business.

"Mersfield got scared and threw his Illyrian stock on the market," continued Sir James, "but the Market stabilized quickly when the Fleet was taken over by Captain Valentine." There is a great danger, however, a tremendous number of caterpillars this spring. I must tell Middleton to have the garden sprayed more often. "As a matter of fact, Illyria has risen by four points."

Malvolio nodded and his eyes opened. "I have been thinking," he said. Sir James puffed out smoke like an amiable chimney.

"I have been thinking about the man Antonio. Had a nice life, didn't he?"

"What do you mean by a nice life?" said Sir James. "Well, it is not exactly my conception of it. I wish I could stay in my garden all day and look after my flowers. To be shot in the back. . . well. And to have all these medals on one's belly, why, the man was in a way quite disgusting."

"You don't understand me, Sir James," said the gentle dry voice, "I mean that the man was an adventurer, that he lived as he wanted, that he lived as in a dream. There was a time when I wanted to be an adventurer myself."

"Well, you certainly got reasonable in time," laughed Sir James, "and as for adventurers, you have your little gambles from time to time." Malvolio sighed. "By the way," said Sir James, "does Lehman agree? I have heard that he is in a tough spot."

Malvolio sighed again; scheming again, but it's my game; my adventures in the world of arithmetic. Only I am getting old. Now I am talking nonsense with Sir James; how could he understand? Quickly to business: "Lehman will give in for sure. His situation is not such that he can run his own independent politics. If you can influence the F.O. until then. . . ."

"I will do my best," said Sir James. There was a little silence. "Coming back to adventures, my friend," he went on, "I think you have not done so badly. That must have been a nice little adventure getting the gold out of the country. And all the blue-prints—just out of Sebastian's clutches. I remember the report about how he raved when you managed to slip through. Isn't that worth recounting as an adventure?"

That was more than mere conversation, Malvolio knew. Only we

cannot speak about it. There are things in one's life which we do not tell even to our closest associates.

To a friend, possibly. But how many friends has a man in a lifetime? No. Malvolio changed the subject: "When the Government is formed, I will see to it that the future of Illyria is shaped according to our joint wishes."

Sir James smoked for a while. At last he spoke up again: "And that man Duval, what is going to happen to him?"

"I don't know," said Malvolio with his purring voice, "and I don't mind. He was acquitted, as you know. Officially, he is all right—but unofficially . . . Well, Sir Toby and Easterfield have cooked his goose for him all right. He may write and talk now as much as he likes, but as a politician he is finished. After all, he was the last man who spoke to the murderer. Didn't you read the reports in the papers?"

Sir James never read papers, his secretary read them for him and gave him the interesting cuttings. As far as murders and murder-trials were concerned, Sir James abhorred bloodshed. "That man Duval," he said, "struck me as a courageous, intelligent man. Fire-brand, but sympathetic. Pity about him. Who was it that informed on him?"

Malvolio closed his eyes: "In a way, nobody. Only, you see, the secretary of 'Unity House,' a certain Fabian, deposed that he had been seen speaking to that Dr. Vitel just prior to the murder. And Duval himself admitted that they did talk about political murder. That, coupled with the feeling expressed in his speeches and his articles was enough, you understand."

Sir James nodded, sucking on his pipe which had gone out. The rope on which a man is hung. Let us rather think of roses.

CHAPTER XIII

MALVOLIO'S SECRET

It took Hendryk a week to find Stettin in the maze of Oliville's streets. Stettin barely recognised his old pal from the electric furnaces, so much had the three months in prison changed the man's face and bearing. Hendryk looked twenty years older, and his hair was grey. But he did not forget the message, entrusted to him by the old priest the night after their arrest.

"Sausages from the butcher at the usual price, paid in advance," repeated Stettin. "Are you quite sure?"

The shop steward nodded; he had been repeating the two phrases to himself day and night in order not to forget.

"Do you know what that means?" he asked, but Stettin did not know. "It is the last message from Father Lorenzo," he said. "Cyril risked his life to contact him on the eve of the 'night of the long knives.' What luck that you got out, so he did not die in vain."

"So they did kill him . . . -" stuttered Hendryk, and Stettin nodded: "Three weeks ago. No good being sentimental about it. His sister got the usual urn with his ashes. Had to pay for it, too. Might happen to any one of us now. But I'm sure they didn't get anything out of him. Not from Father Lorenzo."

Both men were silent for a few instants. "Are you quite sure of the exact wording?"

The shop-steward nodded again. That was all he knew. Stettin left him and hurried to Cyril, who lived with a fellow engineer at St. Paul's. The small man was so moved at the news that for a while he did not speak at all. Then he quickly wrote the message down and applied the cipher to it. The result was simple, just an address: "127, Michelangelo Road, Carolinum."

Carolinum was a luxurious suburb of Oliville. But what did 127, Michelangelo Road mean? Cyril looked at the huge man through the thick glasses which enlarged his almost blind eyes to grotesque dimensions: "Well, brother, now that Father Lorenzo is dead, maybe I can explain at least partly the importance of the message you have conveyed. He was shadowing Sebastian and Rudin with the help of groups 33, 101 and 72. As you know, the relations between Lehman and us are not of the best at the moment. Why this is I cannot say; I don't know.

Possibly because somebody threatens him with blocking the supply of arms if any are diverted to us. The last message seemed very awkward indeed. Lehman is an honest man and not one of these diplomats. I cannot believe that he would desire to dominate the National Liberation Front, or to split it."

"I thought so at first, but after the way he has been fighting we must consider him integral; the only point is his loyalty towards some people overseas. He probably thinks that soldiers must be unpolitical. Well then, there is something which has never been cleared up, something which might form the key to Lehman's confidence and also a spring to get him to political action. I will not

tell you what this is at the moment; you certainly understand why. Your job will be only to memorise this address and in case something happens to me, pass it on to Beaver, who is the Assistant Secretary at the moment."

The giant nodded. He was one of those who felt that it is not theirs to ask what and why. He was a devoted cogwheel in the machine; he would serve until his end came. He wrote down the address and looked at it—then rewrote it again and again. After a moment he looked up and slowly tore up the paper.

"All right," said Cyril, "you go back to your job and cut all ties with our movement. I shall notify Vladislav, Pietro, Jaromir and the rest. If they should not get my message, you tell them yourself. I will notify you when I need you. It will be a special job of great importance."

Stettin got up, he somehow felt much better now, it was a satisfaction to do something again; the waiting had been too bad and the demoralisation taking place throughout the country had affected even his stout heart.

Every day trainloads of men and women were leaving for Germany, only those in country districts being able to escape into the forests and thus to Vargal.

Sebastian went for the week-end to his country house at the Isla, a small tributary of the Var. The country house was in reality a Rococo shateau which had been in the possession of his family ever since it was built by an ancestor of his. Usually there was a whole crowd of guests with him, German and satellite diplomats, neutral business-men and others, but this time Sebastian went alone, except for his friend, the Countess of Loevenbach.

The Countess was one of those beautiful aristocratic women who had thrown in her lot with the Nazis. An ardent admirer of Adolf Hitler before he became Chancellor, she became a very powerful factor in German politics. Blonde, blue-eyed and white-skinned, she seemed the very picture of an Aryan superwoman. There were rumours that she was the Führer's love, but then suddenly their mutual relationship cooled off—there were rumours that it was because of the Führer's extremely poor or even non-existent performance in bed—but nevertheless the Countess still was among the "first ten persons off the record" in the Reich.

By now she was well over thirty, but her great charm, cleverness and beauty made a liaison with her worth while. Sebastian fell in love with her many years ago when he met her during a political

hunt in Germany. Lately his solitude increased that strange, one-sided relationship; of course he knew that the Countess might be or was a German spy. Yet he was an ageing man, strong enough still, but for how long? Besides, he felt safe in his shoes owing to his recent great triumph.

He looked very smart in his grey breeches and his simply-cut jacket without any distinctions. They passed the afternoon fishing for trout in the clear waters of the Isla. The Countess looked very Germanic, very beautiful with her long blonde hair tied up on the top of her head, standing in high boots among the foam of a small inlet.

Trout took to her that afternoon, and Sebastian relaxed. He didn't think for a moment of the trainloads of men leaving their country, nor of those dying in the cellars of the police or the Gestapo. Nor did the rapidly worsening military situation in the East worry him. He thought of himself and this woman.

When they walked back to the chateau, and Franz, the German butler, came to carry the fishing gear, he invited the Countess to walk around the park. The air was fresh and the sun, falling low through the branches, threw golden reflections on the Countess' hair.

"If it was not for the war, Eva," said Sebastian. "I guess I would ask you to marry me." She looked up at him, with an indefinable expression: "Why if it was not for the war? What does it matter? It cannot end except by final victory for German and allied arms."

"Of course not," said Sebastian, but his voice, in spite of its crispness, seemed not absolutely convincing. The Countess gave him a queer look: "You do not seem to be so sure," she said with a little smile which was enigmatic in its meaning.

"You cannot be sure of anything these days," he said rather diplomatically. "A bullet from the back—and one is gone. Look what happened to Antonio even in London, where such things aren't done, strictly speaking—whatever our propaganda says about the English. Here, where so many hate me. . . ."

"You seemed to be nervous," said the Countess, and stopped to stroke his hair. "No wonder, after the tension of the last few weeks. These Bolshevik beasts. . . ." She purred like a cat. "I thought you really loved me," she said. "I thought you invited me here because you loved me. I am too old to be just somebody's pastime. You ought to know that."

He protested that no, of course she wasn't too old, she was as

beautiful as if she was eighteen. It was just a silly love-dialogue between an old man and a middle-aged woman well aware of the fact. The Countess was cool-headed, like a fencer. The week-end was but short and she had not come to Illyria for nothing. There was a task to be done, a secret to be cleared up.

Dr. Zimmermann, the Chief of the Mediterranean Division of the Gestapo, had been trying for months to find out certain details relating to the collapse of Illyria when General Sebastian so heroically took on the heavy task of negotiating with the Führer. Patient investigation for many months did not reveal anything. Bribing and buying off the General's associates did not lead any further. Dr. Zimmermann presumed that Sebastian had kept the secret to himself. And so he took the old weapon out of the armoury of the Secret Service—the "beautiful spy."

The Countess was just the right person for the job. Rootless and restless, she could live only by intrigue; belonging nowhere and living a parasitic life of luxury, she had acquired a scorn for what we call "ordinary" life. She was heartless in the same way as many film-stars are; in the bottom of her heart, sentimental and unhappy, she managed to be the cause of a handful of suicides and one or two family disasters.

Her present job, however, was by no means easy. General Sebastian had led a long life of intrigue and spying himself. Though nearing the end of his "second youth," and also in love, he was careful and not without an autocratic charm which appealed to Eva von Loevenbach. Therefore this was not a task to be solved by one's instinct but by a cool, calculating brain.

They had dinner in a small dining-room adorned with light furniture in the style of Louis XV. In the uncertain light of the candles the Countess was more beautiful than ever, whilst Sebastian seemed old. He was well aware of the fact and did not eat much. Illyria was starving, but here there was the best of everything; he did not touch it, however.

The Countess made spirited conversation, to which he replied only now and then. His long, white fingers drummed on the table. The red flesh of a magnificent orange looked like blood in the flickering reflection of the chandelier. The enchantment of the fishing afternoon passed, and the General was back in his old world of black magic, intrigue, terror, fight for power.

After drinking his coffee, he got up and they walked on to the terrace. It was a violet summer night with the milky-way spanning

the skies like a million drops of dew. From below, the man and woman on the terrace looked like shadows with two glow-worms of burning cigarettes. The night was quiet, except for the singing cicadas under the cypresses and the monotonous steps of the sentries patrolling every square yard of the grounds.

The same sky and the same stars looked down on a quiet lane in Carolinum, a distant suburb of Oliville built on the site of the old Roman village. Here were the houses of the rich, secluded behind high walls in quiet gardens. The quarter was heavily guarded, as practically all of the high officials of the Silver Shirts lived here now.

The peaceful singing of the cicadas was suddenly torn by the whine of a high-powered engine. A black lorry with the insignia of the S.S. was racing down through the moonlight, stopping in front of a high wall. A white plaque on the corner of a few houses lower down the street indicated that this was Michelangelo Road. The number 127 was visible in the skilfully twisted bars of the gate.

A crowd of men in black uniforms and steel helmets jumped down from the lorry in military order. There was a giant in Silver Shirt uniform, who peppered the gate with heavy blows on the knocker.

A sentry approached from inside. The giant said a few words, one of the black men shouted something in a Berlin accent, the gate creaked and opened. The men, a full dozen of them, marched in in military order, leaving two sentries in front of the house. There was a discussion somewhere in the garden, which ended in a sudden silence. Then the gate creaked again; two men in black threw a heavy bundle into the lorry and returned to the house with heavy suitcases. The driver followed with a container. Then there was silence again.

The cicadas, who had stopped chirping at the clatter of uniformed men, took up their monotonous song again, except for one which had been sitting on an almond tree close to the wall of the house. This one didn't take up its melody, because of an ominous hum which came from the cellar, inaudible to humans but clearly discernible to the alert senses of insects.

A group of men stood around a concrete block, with the giant in a Silver Shirt supervising the work. Two of the black men were holding oxy-acetylene burners in their hands, directing the jet of almost invisible flame against the small steel gate which was the only part visible in the white concrete. The heavy steel door leading into

the room had been skilfully opened and the intricate mechanism looked untouched.

"I say, Pepe," said one of the men with the burner, "this will not open easily. I guess we have a job in front of us. What's the time?" The giant looked at his wrist-watch: "About midnight. How long will you take?"

The man took off his uniform jacket: "The door was child's play, thanks to the tip we got from you. But this is cleverly made. I guess we'll take till morning—if we get it done at all!"

The giant shrugged his shoulders. "Get on with the job as well as you can. There is always the dynamite, if the worst comes to the worst." He walked out and checked the corridors.

The coup had been cleverly executed. The whole platoon of picked Silver Shirts of the "General Sebastian" battalion had been overwhelmed by surprise without being able to raise an alarm. Thanks to the detailed plans of the locality, the intruders had been able to cut the cables before entering the house.

Stettin, who could have been recognised from the beginning, had got a magnificent party for this job, everyone a specialist in his branch. The secret of the steel door, manufactured in Illyria, had been betrayed to him by one of the men who had been working on it; Cyril had thought of the coup a long time ago and the engineer had been a member of their organisation for over a year without ever being permitted to do anything. He was kept only for this job; the information regarding the locality did not come to him.

Sebastian had cleverly divided everything, so that it took many months of clever intelligence work to find out where he kept his safe; the vault itself had been built by Polish prisoners who were, as Cyril's informant said, gassed when the job was finished. Not one of the Silver Shirts guarding the place knew about the existence of the underground vault; for them this was simply one of the various houses which the General had almost in every quarter of the town.

Yes, this was a difficult assignment; Stettin knew what the price might be—and so did everybody in the party. Goller, the man with the burner, had been the best safe-breaker in Illyria, and, indeed, of international fame. But this German-made safe presented him with one of the most difficult problems of his chequered career.

"I say, boss," he said to Stettin after four hours of waiting had passed, "that there safe would need five days to get at. Pretty well done, I guess. Good job. Must leave it to them. We will have to use dynamite if we want to get it out of the shell. We'll open it

later. That's easy. Only I'm afraid there will be a hell of a lot of noise."

Stettin thought slowly. He was not a very able tactician, but Cyril had entrusted him with the task because he knew his reliability. "Ludevik," he exclaimed, and a youth in German uniform came running from outside.

Ludevik was a student, hiding from the Germans. An excellent brain. Spoke German fluently. Born soldier. Cyril assigned him to Stettin because the two men fitted well together. The council of war was short. Sentries were redirected. Then silence reigned again. Even the cicada at the almond tree began to chirp again.

Suddenly, just before dawn, the explosion occurred. Several neighbouring houses, alarmed by the shock, were in a state of panic, but the sight of black uniforms soon restored order "Gestapo," said the black uniforms, and there were no more objections.

As far as the local police were concerned, they had been notified by a voice with a Berlin accent that the *Geheime Staats Polizei* desired to use dynamite in an unspecified house in Carolinum. Even Pitui's H.Q. got a similar message on the secret line and there were no questions asked. It was not for the first time that dynamite had been used to break a recalcitrant safe.

Daylight found the house at 127, Michelangelo Road quiet and deserted, except for a number of killed. Dead men tell no tales, and several of the sentries had seen too much. The rest, blinded, including Captain Stropus, the commander, were huddled together in a heap in the heavy lorry which ran smoothly down to the Var. Their conquerors did not say much, and when they were found later in the morning by a milkman's boy they were unable to tell what had actually happened.

General Sebastian, however, knew the extent of the disaster sooner than that. He, too, had done some thinking and possibly there was some kind of instinct which had warned him. He was a light sleeper and usually got up at daybreak to go for a morning ride. The Countess was huddled among the pillows when he lightly left the bed; she was breathing quietly and her face looked loosened and older than usual.

A lock of the blonde hair was twisted around the beautiful arm which protruded from under the blanket. There were one or two grey hairs in that lock. Sebastian sighed. Franz, the German butler, was already waiting in the dressing room, with the early morning tea. The General was sullen and morose.

Then, on a sudden impulse, he went down and rang Oliville. It was by mere chance that he found out about the investigations of the Gestapo in Carolinum; putting two and two together he recalled the conversation he had had with Eva the previous evening. Traitor, shouted his brain.

He rushed into the bedroom and shook her brutally out of her sleep: "Are you a spy of the Gestapo, or aren't you, Eva?" he shouted. "Speak up!" There was not only genuine political anxiety in his voice, but also the hurt pride of an elderly man. The Countess took some time to comprehend that there must be a misunderstanding.

"Speak up," shouted the old dictator. He was slightly ridiculous, with his pyjamas half unbuttoned and the grey hair on his chest. "You have been spying on me, haven't you? Creeping into my bed to sell me to Goering, have you? You slut. . . ."

She shook her head in the most innocent of her gestures. Her conscience was clear, unfortunately. There was nothing he could pin on her. What a pity. "Don't be rude," she said, "and take your hands off me." He had shaken her in his anger. "I have nothing to do with the Gestapo," she lied, "and if I had I would be only a patriotic German. What has happened?" She was getting soothing. Clever woman, that, thought Sebastian, I have acted foolishly. One must not panic. Maybe she knows nothing. We shall see.

He apologised quickly. Something important had happened, he said, he must leave quickly for Oliville. If she wanted to oblige him, he added, she would stay here and amuse herself for a day or two. "I would be much obliged," he said before leaving, "if you did not return to Oliville until I came to fetch you."

That was an order. She knew that it would be useless to try to escape; the chateau, like all places where Sebastian passed his nights, was virtually a fortress with rings of sentries. Besides, there was the German butler, certainly a good *Volksgenosse*. He would tell her what had happened.

Slipping back to bed, she gave Sebastian a charming smile: "But I hope that you have no objection to my going to sleep again? It is so early . . ." she yawned. Sebastian had to smile against his will. She looked beautiful again, with blood pulsing through her cheeks. Vanity, that; male vanity. One cannot admit that one is being used for political purposes instead of for one's manly qualities. Sebastian prided himself on his potency, so why destroy one's illusions if there is no irrefutable proof?

But when his car went rushing into Carolinum, his face was

drawn and severe. It was still very early in the day when it stopped in front of the deserted house. Sebastian, accompanied only by his aide-de-camp, stepped quickly through the half open gate. His face was without a drop of blood, in mimicry of the grey walls.

The cicada at the almond tree was still chirping when the two men walked down to the place where there used to be a staircase. Now there was only a pile of masonry, with a dead body protruding from below it.

The General almost got a heart attack with anger: "The place looks as if it had been bombed. . . Were there no police?" He rushed back to his car. "To Pitui!" he shouted, "No, stop first. You, Bochum"—that to his aide-de-camp—"Get the Silver Shirt patrol, get the C.I.D., do something!"

To his sentries he seemed rather heavily out of his balance; they were used to his crisp voice and collected coolness. But before the big Mercedes stopped in front of the police headquarters, Sebastian had done a lot of quick thinking and he arrived in a much better state.

Firstly, the contents of the safe were his death warrant if they got into Goering's hands; on the other side, it was clear that at the moment, though he had had momentary success, his stock was not very high even without this. What good would it be to Goering? Himmler or Goebbels were a much likelier choice. What a black-mail that would be . . .

But suppose it was not stolen by the Germans. Suppose Boronski stood behind it with his shaved head and a face like a fat knee. That would be a way for him to get the Directorate. . . Or Pitui or Rudin. No, not Rudin, he was too much of a coward. But Pitui, that might be the case.

Sebastian began to regret that he had sent his aide to alarm everybody. It might have been wiser to wait until the conversation with Pitui was over. Surely, he thought, if the man has got the dossier in his hands he will show it. If not, perhaps it will be possible to get him as an associate, in case Boronski should get difficult. Pitui was always a bit of a rival of Boronski's.

As far as Eva was concerned . . . he dismissed that for the moment. No, even if she was an agent—yes, most probably she would be. But there was no possibility of her knowing. None at all. There was, of course, still the possibility that the secret had been found out by the Reds. In that case. . . Sebastian's eyes flashed: that would mean that it would get into Lehman's hands. That would be exactly what they would do. No, this must not happen. But stop, we are not far yet. First let us approach Pitui. And slowly, too.

The burly man was expecting Sebastian in his office. He knew already the whole succession of events and was in a white hot rage. Sebastian knew when he saw him that Pitui could not have his fingers in it. The man was too drunk to play such good comedy: He raged, cursed, stamped the floor.

Sebastian was icy cool, only his white fingers trembled nervously as he broke a cigarette between the second and the ring-finger of his right hand. Unable to stand the other man's shouting, he rang the bell. "Sentry," he said crisply, "a bottle of water." And when the bottle came, he emptied it briskly on the minister's head.

Pitui shook himself and waved his hands, but seeing the eyes of Sebastian he suddenly became entirely free of intoxication. It was so abrupt that in another situation Sebastian would have cracked a joke; but not now. "The contents of the safe," said Pitui, "is their importance personal or political?"

Sebastian put both palms flat on the desk. Only the fingers twitched: "Entirely personal. That's why they must not get out of Oliville. Or, as it might be too late, they must not get further than a circle of some fifty miles. And you are drunk, you swine. Still living on your past laurels? This will break your neck, Pitui. Do something to save it."

Sebastian said these words like stones rattling in a box.

Pitui produced an immense amount of activity; the man was extremely able if and when he wasn't drunk; unfortunately that was rarely.

The telephone rang: "The direct line to Berlin has been tapped," reported Pitui. "They have discovered the place where the cable has been dug out."

So it wasn't the Gestapo. No, either Boronski or the Reds. Or Lehman. Which would amount to about the same. How Sebastian hated Lehman! He pulled out his revolver and put it in front of himself: "Now, Pitui," he said, "show your worth."

"Got it open, Pepe?" asked Stettin of the specialist who had been busy for a long time with five assistants on the stubborn safe. "Almost," said the specialist. "I've been in many a masquerade in my life, but to go dressed as a policeman when one breaks into a house—well. . . ." One of his collaborators brushed his nose with the back of his hand: "Come, the Nazis have been doing it a long time—and the Silver Shirts after them. Look here, Pepe! A crack."

Indeed, as Stettin looked, a small fissure appeared in the battered gate of the steel box. "Excellent workmanship," muttered the thief,

skilfully using a whole scale of instruments. "Would never have got it open but for the dynamite. Ay! Wonder what's in it. Diamonds? Let me look."

They looked, but it took another two hours before Stettin was able to put a hand through the opening. There in a steel cylinder was a thin bundle of papers. He took that, without reading or even showing it, to the neighbouring house where Cyril waited with a crowd of men armed with submachine-guns and pistols.

The place was a deserted farm on the hill tongue leading up to the Vargal, some ninety miles up the country. It had been decided that Stettin would go to Lehman and join the guerillas, as his stay in Oliville was impossible owing to the great danger of being discovered.

Cyril was in the company of a dapper man with school-teacher looks—who actually had been one of the most successful lawyers of his time—and a magnificent looking woman with her hair cut in boyish fashion. Stettin knew who she was, she was Stella, the writer. Both of them had been hiding here a long time. Cyril took the papers from Stettin and glanced through them: "This is it!" he exclaimed.

"Let me see," pressed the lawyer anxiously. Cyril handed him the papers. The lawyer skimmed them and clapped his hands in boyish joy: "What a find! I wonder why he kept such papers. Sebastian's no fool. Why did he not keep them in his palace?"

"Probably he doesn't trust his own people enough. Pitui could have got hold of them, or Boronski. Or the Gestapo. No, the small house in Carolinum was just the right place for them, if he wanted to keep them intact. We had colossal luck. Have a look, Stettin."

Stettin had a look. On top was a thin protocol, written in cipher, with a bundle of papers attached which looked like receipts. There were two signatures on the protocol, Malvolio's and Sebastian's.

As for the receipts, Stettin did not know what they all meant. The lawyer explained: "You remember how we all thought it odd that Malvolio got away so easily at the time of the invasion. It was incredible that he got all the gold out of the country, together with so many secret documents. Those from Sebastian Electrical alone would have filled a goods wagon. It was not we who took them; you remember that at the time, when we wanted to sabotage the plants, the Silver Shirts shot many of our brothers. No, there was more behind it.

"At that time I had an office with a chartered accountant. A meticulous bloke, he figured it all out on paper. And he insisted that Sebastian must have known about the evacuation and actually given

Malvolio a whole staff of helpers. After all, as the owner of the Olivia Trust, he must have been interested in having somebody on the winning side, faint though the chance was at that time that Germany would be defeated. So I figured out that there must be an agreement between the two men."

Cyril crowed with laughter, like a happy hen. "And I did not want to believe him, when he first told me," he shouted, patting the lawyer on the back. It was amazing how transformed he seemed.

But soon he turned serious again: "But Father Lorenzo did from the first. I remember him saying that 'those who don't believe in God try to safeguard themselves a thousand times on earth.' Good old Father Lorenzo. I hope that he's in heaven, if there's such a place."

"And these receipts?" asked Stettin, and the lawyer examined them closely. "It is quite clear," he said at last. "You see, Olivia was not only an Illyrian enterprise, but indeed one of those combines embracing practically the whole world. When war came, they found themselves faced with the disagreeable prospect of having their possessions confiscated if they were caught on the wrong side. That's why they split the leadership; Sebastian went on administering the German-occupied territories, using Rudin as his tool, while Malvolio prevented the rest of the combine, in Britain, America and their colonies from slipping out of their control. Simple, isn't it?"

"But that still doesn't explain the receipts," said the hard-headed Stettin.

"The receipts," explained the lawyer. "Well, even with the war raging some sort of collaboration between the interconnected enterprises of the vast trust had to be established, if the business was to be kept going on both sides. These receipts are from banks in neutral countries, mostly Switzerland. They went on trading with each other, keeping the secret strictly between themselves. The only thing I do not understand is why Sebastian did not destroy these documents. Why keep them in a safe where they can be found? Can you understand it, Cyril?"

Cyril could not figure it out either. But still Stettin's curiosity was not satisfied: "Now tell me, Cyril," he said, "what do you want to do with the papers?"

"Why, show them to old Lehman, of course," said Cyril. "This is about the strongest card we can play. This was needed to show him how things really are. Stella, who has just returned from the Vargal, says that 'Papa' well nigh broke off relations with London

when they started giving him political advice about how to fight a guerilla war; also they wanted him to 'wait and see.' You know that they have urged him for months to keep from fighting. But now 'Papa' will surely help us—that is, if we get this roll to him intact so that they can have it deciphered. Stettin, you take it yourself for the time being, and better get some sleep. We shall leave to-night, and by God it will not be easy."

The small man had the stature of a great leader. It was a loss for the movement in Oliville that he had to go, but after the successful 'coup' it would have been sheer suicide if he or Stettin had returned to their old places.

Cyril had thought of all that in advance. Decentralised as the movement of National Liberation was, all necessary measures had been taken. Stettin did not think of such details; he had done his job and now he would go to sleep. As he left the farm-building, he met Pepe and the rest of his cheerful associates.

"If it wasn't diamonds," he said to him, "it was something much more worth your attention." Pepe smiled: "I have been a guest in quite a lot of prisons. Somehow I don't feel like going back to town."

"That won't be necessary," replied Stettin. "Better have a meal, all of you boys. We leave at night. Probably we shall disperse. The Boche has thrown patrols well between the Vargal and us."

Here Stettin was mistaken. Neither von Zinzel nor the Gestapo knew anything about the contents of the safe and Sebastian was in no hurry to tell them. He didn't even tell Pitui. How could he? No, the secret had to be kept nicely to himself and the only thing he could undertake were reinforced police measures.

He could not even apply to the German Wehrmacht for additional patrols, because the ever worsening military situation forced the command to withdraw units from Illyria—even those which were engaged in actual fighting—and replace them either with Silver Shirts or with satellite troops.

Hungarians had been engaged lately in some numbers, and it would not be wise to give Premier Kelemédy something for his secret dossier. Sebastian ground his teeth: to be delivered like this, bound hand and foot, into the hands of an unknown adversary! He discounted the Countess now. Anyway, if the Gestapo patrol were really genuine, he would hear about it in due course.

Bochum came back and reported that there was no possible clue to the identity of the intruders. Fingerprints were there, of course, thousands of them. Only it was certain that the job itself had been

done by an excellent craftsman who evidently knew how to cut out every scrap of evidence.

But when he saw Boronski next morning, Sebastian was not so sure whether the documents were not in the Silver Shirt leader's hands. Boronski looked rather impudent, his eyes more like a nasty pig's than ever, the small nose sticking under the shaved head like a mushroom growth out of a sick tree.

"You seem to be very worried about that little robbery in Carolinum," Boronski said, standing stiffly after he entered the room. "I am sorry to think that there must have been rather compromising documents among that lot which disappeared. Perhaps love-letters of some sort, my Leader?"

Sebastian got up, angrily. "You forget to whom you are talking, Boronski. Even your high post does not give you the right to go on like this. Get out." His voice was as collected as ever. Old military habit, which caused people to snap when the order sounded.

But Boronski did not snap. On the contrary, he sat down and made himself comfortable; out of a seventeenth century enamelled bottle he poured a glass full of whiskey: "It is astonishing how leaders sometimes forget those who have been following their path for many years. I don't wish to draw comparisons with our mighty protector, but I never fancied myself very much like Roehm."

What the hell is the man driving at? thought Sebastian, why, I wasn't thinking of letting this man follow the fate of the Storm Troop leader shot by Hitler in '34. *Quod licet* to Adolf, Sebastian can't afford. Though one feels inclined for such measures—at least sometimes.

He sat down and both men measured each other with narrowed eyes. "Listen, Boronski," Sebastian said at last, "are you mad or merely impudent? Who the blazes whispered any such comments into your ear?"

The man showed his yellow teeth: "I have got my sources. And there are some reports that you have some contacts with London. Now that Antonio is dead you ought to be wiser. No, don't object, I know that nothing can be proved. If it could, Pitui or the Gestapo would have found out. But I have kept an eye on you, I and your faithful Silver Shirts. You have created us, and we are sure that you are going to stay with us. To the end."

The small eyes closed and the man wiped the pear-shaped nose. There was perspiration on his shaven head. He pulled out a checked handkerchief and methodically wiped his forehead with small dabs.

Sebastian did not reply. So it wasn't Boronski; though one cannot

leave out that possibility; the man is dangerous and how long will one be able to play this game of balance of power? As long as the situation was good, everything was in order; now that the situation is becoming increasingly worse, people like Boronski, Pitui, Vendal . . . God knows. Where are the Silver Shirts? That's what I'd like to know. This man wouldn't sit here like this if he wasn't sure of at least some support. Good that von Zinzels stands by me. We hope.

Boronski was pouring himself another glass; Sebastian had never known him drink so quickly: "This morning, my Leader," he said with his squeaky voice, "there have been labels bearing our names at the lamp-posts in Victory Square. We have seen these labels there for the last five days and despite the fact that we have hung two men who have been caught redhanded, this morning the labels were there again. I would like to hear your assurance that if it happens that these lamp-posts are used, we can be assured of your company."

Blackmail, thought Sebastian, he has a quick deductive mind but he doesn't know anything. Well, we have done what we could. "You are drunk, Boronski," he said, getting up. "I propose that you come and see me after lunch."

The man with the shaved head giggled, a nasty, guttural giggle: "Well, what I wanted to say to you: I think I am going to resign. As Vendal wrote yesterday in the *Silver Arrow*. 'All those who do not feel themselves entirely happy in our movement should resign.' Yes. You'd do me a Roehm or they'd hang me when it all ends badly. I'm going to resign while there is time. But you won't get to London, my Leader. Think of Antonio." His head fell on the table with a plop.

And we thought that he knew; such a lot of brute flesh. Sebastian rang the bell: "Bochum," he said "Take the Colonel to my private bedroom. He is tired and needs rest."

"We are sure you are going to stay with us until the end, aren't you, my leader?" mumbled Boronski, his pig eyes showing their whites as he turned them towards Sebastian. "Shut up," said the General crisply, striding quickly towards his desk. "Take him away." The door closed.

From the corridor there came the echo of an old Silver Shirt song. Then it was silent. Sebastian looked out of the window at the passing sentries, thought of von Zinzels, Countess von Loevenbach in the chateau, of the exploded safe of 127, Carolinum. "Hell," he said himself. "Names on lamp-posts." But there was nobody to reply.

The journey to Vargal took less than three weeks. Cyril had given

orders for dispersal and the little party made their way, practically every man for himself, in groups of two and threes. The conditions varied.

Cyril and Stettin were able to travel quite a part of the journey in a hay cart, dragged by two lean, hungry oxen along the stony, winding lanes white with dust and summer heat. Villages were few and far between; the nearer to the mountains, the more desolate the landscape. For the second half of their journey they abandoned the cart and walked through the open hills to the first thin forest of pines which breathed coolly from the slopes of the ever increasing hills. On these side-lanes the live front between the partisans and the forces of occupation thinned out to mere patrols.

The countryside being very sparsely populated, such a thing as a proper occupation was impossible, especially as the forces which the German Command was able to employ were getting smaller day by day. They were satisfied to hold towns, railways, stations and other nodal points of communication, defending them against the raids of General Lehman's irregulars.

One such patrol captured the two men soon after their arrival in the Vargal district proper. Their temporary head-quarters, pushed gipsy-like from settlement to settlement, was for that night in a tiny village of wood-cutters, hidden in the forests at the foot of Mount Tabor, called after the biblical mountain by the peasants who had fled there in one of the mediæval peasant-revolts against the gentry.

The commander, a stocky, square-faced young man in a leather-jacket, with a belt of rifle-cartridges slung over his shoulders, listened to Cyril and Stettin while having his evening meal of potatoes and sour milk provided by the local vicar.

This was practically no-man's land and it was almost every day that men were coming up the valleys from the land below to join the Vargal army; the commander was kind but cautious. Very often there were spies among those who came to fight. After bitter experiences Donath had organised a clearing centre where all newcomers were interrogated and cross-questioned before being incorporated in the units; Cyril was glad when they started their journey again, northwards, with military escort this time. With them there were twenty or so other newcomers, mostly men who had got away from Sebastian's labour conscription.

Donath had been notified soon after their arrival and came to see them in the hut where they were quartered; he was by now the chief intelligence officer of the Vargal army, and though he did not know Cyril personally, his identity was soon established. Two hours later

the two men met the General himself in his wooden hut half-hidden in a clearing at the bottom of a deep-cut valley. Donath took them there in an Italian manufactured staff car run on German petrol.

'Papa' Lehman lived very simply, in keeping with his peasant origin. When one saw him reading his reports, in the embroidered shirt of the simple costume of the hills, glasses on the tip of thin, protruding nose, one would have taken this man to be a school-master or a village priest. But the eyes behind these silver rimmed glasses were steel blue and alert, and the mind of the slow-moving man was quick and penetrating.

A peasant woman, who was cleaning the room when the three men arrived, dashed out like a shadow and the maps filling the black and white of the log-walls rustled in the draught from the door. The General got up and shook hands with Cyril, and when the three men sat down there was a long silence, while 'Papa' lit a long pipe with a porcelain head which dangled thoughtfully in the corner of his mouth.

At last he took out the pipe: "So things are not so good in the plain," he said slowly. "I hear that Sebastian has his troubles too."

"I am afraid that ours are slightly greater these days," said Stettin, and Cyril added a short survey of the situation as he saw it. The General listened without moving, only the long pipe swung gently from side to side. "I am sorry I was unable to help. After the assistance you gave me last autumn I would have been glad to let you have something in return. But unfortunately we had grave losses this spring, when the Boche started their last offensive. They had two squadrons of dive-bombers and we had to retreat beyond Tarin. No, I didn't have even one parabellum-pistol too many."

The two men from the plain looked at each other. Cyril adjusted his thick glasses and made a frontal attack on the General: "I am afraid that many explained your action by the fact that London does not look too favourably on us." These were hard words, 'Papa' nodded and took the pipe out of his teeth: "I know. But what could we do? We are too weak to attack. Thank God the Germans are occupied elsewhere; we had respite to conclude our preparations."

"Respite for you," said Cyril bitterly, "but not for us. You still see the situation only through the eyes of a commander of an army. But this army of the Vargal is merely a fraction of the movement which should unite our whole country. Besides, all actions undertaken by yourself have great political significance. Do you appreciate that?" 'Papa' frowned: "Now look here, I am a soldier. This

army that has fought for so many years is the army of independent Illyria, and whoever fights with me against the invader is my ally. I cannot say that I love the set-up in London, but they are with us and they have been of great help to me already. Without them, the Boche would have got us. True, they wanted me to be War Minister in that Cabinet there before they sent the stuff, but I don't care what is what and who is who as long as the supplies arrive. As far as I am concerned they can go to hell. Especially since that man Duval got muddled up in Antonio's murder. I think that now matters are in a perfect mess."

"I am afraid, sir, that I must disagree with you," said Donath, "you are wronging Duval."

"Keep your mouth shut, Donath," barked the General. "Since you have become Intelligence man you see intrigues and spies all over the place."

"I am afraid, sir, that I cannot shut up this time," insisted Donath. "If you consider me wrong, maybe you can find an abler man for my job. Duval is the victim of a frame-up and in the bottom of your heart you know that too. I am afraid you are far too straight for politics, sir."

The General jumped up, eyes flashing, but sat down immediately, mastering himself. "In these times junior officers have no respect for their elders," he said. Cyril smiled. "But our army is being led by juniors," continued the General, "all that I can do is keep them supplied and organise a bit. That's the part of the job where I can be most useful. But the leading of patrols, small-scale battles—why, every peasant lad from the Vargal with a bit of fire in his veins and brain in his head can learn that. It's all very nice to talk of mutual assistance and unity. But think of the supplies. That's why I permitted them to use my name. It's a bad exchange for them, but so much the better for us here."

"There you are mistaken, General," said Cyril. "Your name is more important than anything. Until now you have been the acknowledged leader of our nation's resistance. If you become the stooge of a clique of politicians all is lost, the National Liberation Front falls to pieces and the Silver Shirts will manage to sell us out before the liberation armies arrive. You have duties not only to your men, but to the whole nation. The day will come when all Illyria will rise against the oppressor; your armies will be the kernel of that battle, and the workers in the plain are ready to rise on their side. We have come to ask you to dissociate yourself from all those playing a double game."

'Papa' took his pipe out of his mouth, and lit it slowly. "When you make an allegation like this," he said after a pause, "I guess you have some proofs too. You know I'm of a doubting nature. I'd like to see them."

The two men looked at each other and smiled; it was so much easier than they thought it would be. "That's exactly why we have come," said Cyril, and started cutting the hem of his jacket.

The General looked at the document and the attached receipts: "Seems to be a complicated cipher," he said into his moustache. "Donath, that's a job for you, you're the expert. But the signatures, yes. They are genuine. And the receipts, why . . . that means that Sebastian has been in touch with Malvolio from the start. Clever. Damn clever." The General weighed the bundle of documents in his palm before handing it over to Donath: "How did you find it?" he asked, and in his eyes there was a flash of boyish delight in adventure stories.

Cyril told him in a few words. 'Papa' listened intently. "But what do you expect me to do? Go to London and make a rumpus?"

"That would not be a bad idea," said Cyril. "I wish I could do that," said 'Papa.' "I wish I could. But I cannot leave my boys here, can I? We're in a tough spot." The pipe went out again. He had to relight it. "On the other hand, this must be cleared up. I know what we'll do, Cyril, you go to London, I give you Donath with full powers. What about it?"

"I'm afraid I'd end like Igor Duval, if you don't come with us," retorted Cyril. "After all, you have your responsibilities, whether you like it or not. And they won't be able to sink you."

"If I go, I promise you that they won't," said 'Papa' hiding behind a thick cloud of potato leaf smoke which made Cyril cough. "I'm afraid that nobody but yourself can mend the situation," said Stettin. "You cannot refuse the request of our people."

The General got up and walked slowly in front of them, weighing the documents in his hand and smoking furiously.

"I have been thinking," he said at last, "about why Sebastian kept documents like these, instead of destroying them. I think that is the key to the situation."

"And you have solved it, sir?" asked Cyril, who had regained his breath.

"It's simple," said the General, "he wanted them as a proof in case things went badly for the Germans. He would be able to prove that he had been loyal to the Allies all the way through. And keep

what he had grabbed. There will be many like him. Unless we prevent it."

"Does that mean that you will be going to London?" Cyril asked.

"It does," said the General.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LOST GOVERNMENT

THE sensation created by the sudden arrival of General Lehman in London is probably sufficiently well remembered to need no recalling. He received excellent publicity, though his stay in Britain coincided with the mighty operations in the West, and, for military reasons, was limited only to a very short period of time. In the beginning, however, his task seemed an uphill one. After the refusal of the Illyrian Government circles to change their policy—and especially after Malvolio's riposts that the documents were faked, the General, Igor, Dr. Bruyl and Cyril had appealed to the British people for help.

Lord Camden, the Foreign Secretary at that time, was faced with a diplomatic impasse, because it seemed to him that after all the whole matter was much more an internal Illyrian affair than one concerning his own Government. It must be said however, much to the credit of the present Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, Sir John Wainwright, that at that time he fought indomitably for the rights of a people which, though small and little known, yet presented a test-case for the Allied intentions regarding liberated Europe.

The matter was helped greatly, when, at the appeal of General Lehman and the (then) plain Mr. Wainwright, the whole British people spoke up expressing their solidarity with their brothers of the Continent. The demonstrations in the streets of London, as a matter of fact, were the biggest the British capital has ever seen. It all happened because of the Partisan leader's ability to capture the British people's imagination, or because, possibly, it became clear to them how great was their own responsibility for a really better future.

Then and there, three hundred thousand people pledged themselves to stand by all the nations of Europe and swore that their great country would never make a pact with appeasers, quislings or reactionary forces in general, and that, in accordance with the decisions of Teheran, every people of Europe should have complete freedom to choose its own form of Government.

The giant meeting, which entirely blocked all traffic in Piccadilly, Leicester Square and Trafalgar Square, lasted almost three hours. It was followed by a demonstration in Downing-Street, with a deputation to Number Ten; this deputation, led by a certain Mrs. Marjorie Clapson from Camden Town, was actually received by the Prime Minister and their historic conversation need not be repeated in detail, as it has since passed into history books.

It was astounding that the simple housewife who had never before mixed in politics should be able to influence one of the most important political events in World War II. But we must not forget that at that time she really spoke for the British people, and that in a true democracy even the last citizen has the right to be heard by those in charge of the destiny of his or her country.

What Mrs. Clapson said at that historic moment was, roughly, that she, being a member of a free people, did not want to see other nations sold to mighty economic interests, and that, as she did not want her children's children to go to war once more, she insisted on a careful inquiry into the partners with which her Government was to deal in order to bring about a better future.

These, of course, were not her words, she was not much of a speaker and she did not know how to express herself smoothly and coherently. Yet this was the spirit of what she said, and the Prime Minister was deeply moved.

As is known, Mrs. Clapson refused any publicity afterwards, and though Lord Easterfield, Chairman of the mighty Easterfield Press, offered later to build her up as a National Figure, she refused and returned quietly to her little house in Camden Town; the only advancement she accepted was the chairmanship of the "Comforts for the Forces" knitting club of her square.

Yet the results of her intervention and of the flood of meetings which were held over the whole territory of Britain were such that within a few days the Illyrian Government handed in its resignation to Duke Orsino, especially after the great inquiry into the activities of the Olivia Steel and the International Armament Trust had unearthed sensational liaisons between several giant combines on the Allied side and those of the enemy.

The Easterfield Press was among the first press concerns to give prominence to the documents brought from Illyria by the courageous intervention of Cyril, Stettin and General Lehman, and when the project of the South Eastern Federation called 'Danubia' was exploded by subsequent events, Lord Easterfield himself apologised in

the columns of his paper for a political misconception based, as he said mainly on faulty information.

The public pressure at that time was so strong, that it even forced an open disclosure of the above-mentioned inquiry into the activities of Olivia Steel and International Trust Armament Trust, and both Malvolio and Sir James Bowhill saved themselves from imprisonment only by a timely flight to Portugal, where they remained until the end of the war.

Olivia was taken over by the reconstituted Illyrian Government, while the International Armament Trust was changed into a co-operative enterprise to be run under the control of the British people.

Very soon after the war it was converted to the production of tractors and other agricultural implements and helped a great deal to restore the ravaged agriculture of the world, much to the delight of its workers, who had a cooperative share in the profits.

When the old Illyrian Government resigned, Duke Orsino asked General Lehman to form a government of the United National Resistance Movement. But the General refused; his place, he said, was among his men in the mountains of the Vargal, men who were soon to take part in the great offensive of all the Allies against Nazi Germany and the great rising of the whole people, which freed their country before any intervention of their allies.

There were abler men than himself, the General said, pointing to Dr. Bruyl. And indeed it was Dr. Bruyl who led the reconstructed Government of Illyria, which lasted until the end of the war and played such a big part in the liberation of his country.

Malvolio's fall drew into the abyss many of the old set-up, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, greatly compromised by machinations at the Stock-Exchange, was only too happy to disappear into private life. As far as is known, he has gone into Big Business, where his diplomatic abilities are greatly appreciated. The post of Ambassador to Great Britain was taken over by Cyril, who, as General Lehman said, had the best right to speak in the name of his people, as he had led their resistance for such a long time and knew them so well.

Sir Toby, too, had to go, for there was much against him which he would have preferred to remain unknown; however, Malvolio, minute as he was, kept proper accounts of every penny he spent and in his cheque books the name of Sir Toby Belch was mentioned more than once. Igor stepped into his place, and thus from the old set-up only Cromin, General Curio, Cardinal Révy and Captain Valentine remained.

Igor was strongly against Cromin, but there was very little to prove that Cromin was involved in the *affaire Malvolio*; besides, Mr. Wainwright warned Dr. Bruyl about making too radical changes, as this might draw the suspicions of the more conservative among the Allies; Cromin had powerful support, especially in the United States—and his negotiations with U.N.R.R.A. were, on the whole, very successful indeed. Dr. Bruyl compensated for Cromin's presence by including Lubomir Bratui, the peasant leader, who was made Minister of Reconstruction. The final judgement, Dr. Bruyl knew, would be left in any case with the people of liberated Illyria.

In the Illyrian Army in Britain, General Lehman's presence proved a great tonic. The men in the ranks realised that they were not merely a show piece, to be used mainly for political reasons and for the occupation of their country after the war, but that they were now, in fact, in the same ranks as those thousands in the mountains of Vargal or the underground fighters in the factories and mines of Oliville. Captain Valentine could not resist a thorough cleansing of the Fleet, from which all Fascists and officers of the old Antonio clique were excluded, and new ones were created from the ranks.

It was a pity that General Lehman's stay in Britain was so short, for his influence was felt far beyond Illyrian affairs. However, his place was in his own country, and after having finished the clean-up, he returned to Vargal, accompanied by the faithful Donath and Stettin, who yearned for the acorn extract of the hills: "That coffee is too strong for me," he said to Igor before they left England, "I'd better go back and drink what the others are drinking, otherwise I might get used to a better life and would not fit in when I return."

This then was Illyrian politics until the end of the Great War. But though this explains many a motive, it still does not clear the actual circumstances of the strange disappearance of this Government of Free Illyria which happened only three days after the conclusion of the Armistice. As a matter of fact, what happened was this:

After Squadron-Leader Archibald gave the occupants of the Ducal plane the instructions to jump by parachute, the whole Government took to their parachutes with complete calm and quiet. One must say for Duchess Viola, that she was really a courageous woman, as for a lady of her age a jump by parachute is not an every-day experience.

The Duke, who was in front of her, seemed rather hesitant about when to jump into the boiling clouds, in which by that time the plane was descending, and it was never clear whether her High-

ness, who stepped closely behind him as he stood there in the door, gave him a push or not. Igor would have sworn that she did, only there was never occasion for him to do so.

In any case, the Duke got out and she jumped quickly after, carefully holding her long black skirt. The Cardinal, crossing himself three times, followed suit, closing his eyes before stepping into the void.

At this moment the ship got into an air-pocket and it so happened that Igor, Cromin and Dr. Bruyl tumbled out of the plane in a disagreeable scramble, followed closely by Captain Valentine. As for Princess Marguerite, she had jumped before the Duke did, with the experienced gesture of a parachutist—though this was her first jump.

It all happened so swiftly that for a few moments Igor forgot to pull the rip cord. He had a strange feeling, hurtling through the clouds to the yet invisible Illyrian earth, of flying back in time, back to the moment of his departure. The circle was closed, and he felt he was very much where he had started.

However, the circle seemed uncomfortably finite, and Igor remembered in time that a few seconds longer of this swift fall might mean death. He felt with his right hand for the rip-cord, while turning somersaults in the rushing stream of air. At last he found the handle; he pulled, and the force of the opening parachute almost broke his back; so at least it seemed at the moment.

But afterwards, with the wind throwing his body from side to side under the parachute, he found out that his back was far from broken and that it ached for all its worth. He looked round, but in the boiling imbroglio of the clouds he couldn't see anybody. He was alone, under the white silky mushroom, drifting God knew where. At last he saw the earth. The cloud cover opened suddenly, and there, some three hundred feet lower, was a wooded mountain ravine. Just the right place, thought Igor, to get entangled in a tree.

He tried to pull the strings of the parachute so as to drift to the other side of the ravine, but he did not seem too skilful because his fall only speeded up. In an incredibly short time the trees rushed up all around him, and just when he got ready for the shock of landing, his fall was suddenly arrested by a supple impact; his parachute got entangled in a tree and Igor was left in a disagreeably suspended position some fifteen feet high above the rocky bed, swaying gently in the rhythm of the wind.

The Duke had a disagreeable landing, having drifted sideways into a rocky slope. A sudden guffaw of the wind pulled him over some

brushwood before he managed to slip out of the parachute harness. At last he got free and surveyed the damage; his trousers were torn to shreds, his left knee was bleeding and instead of his travelling jacket he saw only the tattered remnants of the sleeves. This did not look exactly ducal; his face was scratched and his right eye was swelling.

A little spring was bubbling between two stones. He limped down and washed off the blood. The water was cool and agreeable. He felt much better at once. The storm seemed over. Not knowing where he was, the Duke looked around, so as to identify the countryside; but he tried in vain to get his bearings.

At last the mist was lifting; the Duke got up, watched carefully, and to his immense joy he suddenly perceived several cows grazing quietly on the slope opposite. Where there are cows, there must be humans nearby, meditated the Duke starting up the slope.

When he arrived at the cows he sat down. The clouds were lifting, and as with these mountain storms, the evening sun was shining on the peaks around. There was peace and quiet around him, only occasionally the bells on the cow's neck tinkled in a sad harmony. They did not seem to take much notice of his presence. The Duke felt his knee aching and hunger and thirst gnawing at his inside.

One of the cows, a neat, wide-eyed beast with lovely brown streaks across her body, stepped forward, lifting her rosy wet nostrils towards the Duke. Her full udder swung tantalisingly from side to side. The Duke felt like a drink of milk. He looked around, but there was still nobody in sight. He stepped nearer. The cow mooed invitingly and started chewing the grass.

The Duke remembered once seeing two boys lying on their backs under the cow and pulling adroitly on the teats so that the hot milk poured in a foaming stream directly into their open mouths. We cannot do that, true, he thought, but maybe we can make a cup out of some paper. And try milking.

One would not believe how difficult it is to milk a cow if one is not a professional. Also, cows do not seem to like to be pulled by their teats. It wasn't until his third attempt that the Duke succeeded in extracting some milk from the recalcitrant animal. He had produced a small cup out of some folded letters. Just as he was putting the cup to his lips, there were voices behind him.

Illyrian voices. Two peasants, in the picturesque costume of the hills, both with cartridge belts around their shoulders and Mausers on their back. They looked quite friendly, as they stepped nearer. The Duke wondered what to do. He wasn't exactly in the right state to get up and divulge his identity; there wasn't much splendour

about him. Besides, he had just tried to pinch some milk. Better let us see what the two are going to say. But thank God we know that we are inside Illyria.

"Thirsty?" asked the older of the two good-humouredly, "don't you worry, mate, just go on drinking. Here's a cup." He produced a wooden cup which he handed over to the Duke. While he drank, the two men measured him with their eyes. "From Germany?" they asked, and the younger one added: "There's some bread and cheese. Have it, mate."

The Duke nodded and took the food. He really was hungry.

"From Germany?" asked the older man once more, and this time the Duke thought it better to say yes. He nodded. The two men began to talk. There was considerable traffic through the mountains these days, with German deserters escaping from Germany and foreign workers trying to make their way through to their respective countries.

"Thank God the Germans are defeated," said the older man, and the younger added: "They could have tried for another five years and still they would not have conquered us."

"You have deserved your liberty," said the Duke, "deserved it well indeed."

"I should say so," said the younger of the men, and the older one added: "This time, nobody will take it from us."

"We are going to run our country ourselves," said the younger man proudly. "If we knew how to fight for it, we will also know how to manage it."

"But haven't you a Duke in London?" asked the Duke, trying to look as unconcerned as possible. Thank God for this scratched face. One couldn't read its expression.

"Ay, him," said the older peasant, "of course we have. But as he wasn't with us when things were bad, he might just as well stay there."

"Isn't that a bit hard on him?" said the Duke. "Certainly the Germans would have put him in gaol and that wouldn't have been much good to you."

The older peasant looked at him rather suspiciously: "You seem a bit of a monarchist, churn," he said. "If we could get on without him when things were bad, certainly we will be able to get on without him when things are good again."

"And if he comes back?" asked the Duke.

“Well, we’ve always got this,” said the younger man, caressing his rifle. “There, have some more cheese.”

But the Duke stopped eating. The food stuck in his throat.

Cromin had landed on a haystack, a fact which had greatly eased the impact. The haystack was one of these high structures on four poles which keep the hay well out of the reaches of horses and cows which might be attracted by its tempting smell. The haystack collapsed with some-noise and Cromin picked himself up without much ado. Except for his glasses, nothing was broken. He rolled his parachute into a bundle and hid it under a huge stone.

Under the slope, there was a village. Cromin saw the coloured patches of the well-tilled fields and the yellow discs of sunflowers glowed in the evening light like so many gold coins. Though Cromin was not sure, this looked like Illyria to him. He stepped out to reach the village before night fell.

After a few minutes’ walk he heard something like a whimper; he stopped and listened. It came from the direction of a hazel grove, and it was a whimper for sure. Carefully he walked towards the grove and, shifting the branches aside, he saw Cardinal Révy massaging his huge round back. The tattered remnants of the parachute hung from the branches like linen on a washing day. The operation seemed painful, for though the Cardinal deemed it necessary, he whimpered whenever he touched the curved part of his body.

Cromin pushed the bushes aside and stepped towards the priest: “Can I help you, Your Eminence?”

The Cardinal looked up; evidently he had had a shock. “Ah, it’s you, Your Excellency,” he said. “Bless you. I was worried in case this was still enemy territory. I guess you know. Is it?”

Cromin cheered him up. “Are you hurt?” he asked, bending down to the damaged part of the Cardinal’s body, but the priest waved his hand. “Not hurt,” he said in a painful voice. “It’s my sciatica. It is horrible in weather like this.”

Cromin had to smile, and the smile gave his mouth a bitter twist. “Can you walk, Your Eminence? We’ve got to get to the village in the valley. We must notify Oliville at once about our arrival.”

The Cardinal got up, holding his right hand on the painful spot. “I don’t know whether we should walk into the village just like this,” he said. “You don’t know what the reception might be.”

Cromin looked up. Reception. Yes, he did not think of this. But down we must go, to make inquiries about the others. The storm

has probably blown the parachutes to the four winds. So down we go.

"You are a fine sight," laughed the girl. "I'm almost tempted to leave you hanging there overnight and charge a fee for looking at you."

Igor was angry. No wonder; to hang helpless from a tree, unable to get out of the harness because it has entangled itself on your back, with a young lass pulling your leg, is not exactly a dignified matter. "Come on, Your Highness, get me loose."

"Marguerite," she corrected him. "Unless you say Marguerite I don't move a little finger."

"All right," he said morosely, "Marguerite."

"Say 'please,' will you?"

"Please," he said. And then she clambered up the tree with a boyish adroitness and began to loosen the ropes. They snapped and Igor fell on to the grass like a plum.

While he was dusting himself, she jumped down from the tree. "I am going to join the parachutists," she said, showing her beautiful little teeth. "This is my first jump, but I liked it. You didn't seem to enjoy it too much."

Igor buzzed something between his teeth; it didn't sound much like a compliment. But the girl didn't seem to mind. "Do you know what happened to Rudolph or to Mama?" she asked, but Igor did not know. "The storm has probably blown us quite apart," he said, extricating fir-needles from his hair. "The best thing will be if we try to find some humans. It looks like Vargal, but it might be the other side of the frontier. We'd better hide our parachutes."

She pulled a beetle from behind his collar. "I've done that with mine already, you little genius," she said. "You are so clever, Igor. Don't look so peevish."

"I don't look peevish," he opposed.

"Yes you are," she said.

"I am not," insisted he. And without further fuss he took her by the arm. "From now on, Marguerite, you're under my command. I'm the senior here, understand? All right. March."

And they stepped out and walked down the valley on something which looked very much like a footpath.

"What are these men doing, Your Excellency?" asked the Cardinal, when the two men reached the outskirts of the village. "It looks as if they are measuring something."

Indeed in the evening light there stood a group of men, with a rope and a bundle of pegs. They were walking on the edges of a huge field, trailing the rope behind them and putting pegs into the fat soil of the valley.

"Good evening, Father," shouted one of them, "you are just in time to give us your blessing."

These simple villagers will hardly recognise a Cardinal, as they have never seen one, thought Cardinal Révy. For them I'm just a simple priest. What will be their joy when I disclose my identity! Thank God, this is my own country at last. Jolly good to be here.

"God be with you, children," he said in his holiest voice. "But pray explain to me what you are doing here?"

"Measuring the land, Father. Good land, just look how fat the soil is." It was an old peasant speaking and he let the soil run through his fingers in a typical gesture. "Have you come from far away?"

"From very far away." It *will* be a surprise when we disclose our identity. . . . "This is your field which you are dividing?"

"Oh, yes," said a young man, who had just stuck in a peg, with considerable pride. "This is our field. Yesterday it still belonged to the landlord, but to-day it's ours. Yesterday we had nothing, but now the fields in which we are working are ours. Ours and nobody else's."

"But this is sin," murmured the Cardinal, while Cromin asked poignantly: "And what happened to the landlord?"

"We have hanged him," said the old peasant simply. "He had been working with the Germans from the start. He sold them butter and pork and maize which came from our lands. The German Colonel was quartered in his house during the last weeks before we drove them out."

"But this is murder," said the Cardinal, while Cromin nervously fingered his collar. "Is this sort of business going on all over the country?" he asked after gulping once or twice.

"Oh yes," said the peasant cheerfully. "Everywhere. We've been working for many generations for the landlords. Now we have been fighting the Germans while the landlords were doing business with them. So what? Now we've got our freedom. So we take the land. We cultivate it. So it's ours. Our sons died for it."

The Cardinal cleared his throat. "Do you know what happened to Sebastian?"

"I'm not sure," said the old peasant, "but Uncle Mirko said that the wireless announced that they had hanged him."

"Hanged him?" stuttered Cromin.

"Yes," said the peasant. "On a lamp-post, too. That's where he belongs. And all landlords."

"Now, are you going to give us your blessing?" asked the man with the peg in his hands. He seemed the happiest man in the world.

Cardinal Révy looked at Cromin and Cromin looked back. What else could one do? All right, they should have the blessing. The Cardinal gave it. Cromin still fingered his collar. It seemed rather narrow.

"Where are you men going?" asked General Curio, who was walking with Captain Valentine down a winding mountain lane when a company of armed men stopped and questioned them.

"You'd better tell us who *you* are and where *you* are going," said their commander, a young man in a railwayman's uniform but in the forage cap of the regular forces. His men were mostly land workers with a sprinkling of woodcutters from the nearby sawmill.

Curio told them, without, however, mentioning his rank. He, too, thought whether he should or should not spring it on them as a surprise. He was in the gala uniform of the Illyrian army, with all the medals on his chest, a sight rather unusual for the eyes of the young railwayman. Captain Valentine was much wiser; he had dressed himself in civvies.

"What does this uniform mean?" asked the young leader. "Are you a German satellite officer?" Curio was so shocked that he almost got a heart attack.

"I am General Curio, His Highness the Duke of Orsino's Commander-in-Chief," he said rather stiffly, expecting to produce in the young man some effect. But the effect produced was rather opposite to that expected. "I know only one Commander-in-Chief here," he said, "and that is General Lehman. Only he resigned two days ago."

"Lehman—resigned?" stuttered Curio. "What does this mean?"

Even the phlegmatic Captain Valentine could not understand what had happened.

"Well," said the young man, "he thought that after the war was finished it was the proper thing for a military commander to relinquish his power to the civilian authorities. As he put it, Generals are only a necessary evil and he hoped that this evil was no longer necessary after his people had regained their freedom."

Curio gasped: "And who are you and your men?"

"We are the National Guard," said the young man proudly, but with great sincerity. "We have to see to it that the will of our people is properly executed. We catch war profiteers, recalcitrant Silver Shirts, Nazis, Fascists and bring them before the Civic Courts to be tried. We see to it that all Nazi and Silver Shirt laws are immediately abandoned and yet that the life of our nation goes on in order and progress. So much about us. Now what about you? I heard you saying something about a command. Have you been fighting the Germans?"

General Curio did not know what to say. "I . . . commanded. . . ."

"You were in the Vargal?" asked the lad. "In that case, hats off to you."

"I" begun Curio, but Captain Valentine nudged him so strongly in the back, that he shut his mouth before he said anything.

"You said something, sir?" asked the young man, but General Curio only shook his head. No, he hadn't said anything. Any more questions, my young friend? No, no more questions. Well, let us part then Good-bye. And God speed.

"There you are," said Curio slowly, "and I thought we would come as liberators . . . only to find . . ."

"To find what?" asked Valentine, and the General went on:

"To find that they have liberated themselves. We are no longer necessary." The two men walked slowly towards the village. The sun was setting and the light was bathing the countryside in a sea of golden colours. The earth smelt heavily, and the pine forests on the slopes around rustled an evensong.

"I wonder what we should do now," said the General thoughtfully, kicking with his heel the black soil of the lane. "I wish I could disappear."

"Who says you cannot?" asked Captain Valentine. "Yes, I think that would be the best."

"You are right, dear friend," said the General. "I have a mighty strong feeling that if we do not disappear voluntarily, they would make us sooner or later. And the aeroplane disaster . . . well. We have died as heroes. And I always wanted a hero's death if I could not ride on a white horse in the procession of liberation through the streets of Oliville."

Captain Valentine did not reply. He merely stroked with his hand a small birch standing by the lane. It was quite good to be home again. Though it would not be easy to get used to it.

"I am afraid I will not do it," said the Duke. Old Duchess Viola, who had landed safely on top of a hill, looked comical in her torn dark afternoon dress, with the heels of her fine shoes broken off. They sat together in the meadow where the Duke had met the two men and waited for a mule which was being brought up to transport the Duchess into the valley.

"I will do nothing of that sort," repeated the Duke thoughtfully, "I am through with it."

"But this is unheard of," argued the Duchess. "You owe it to your people, to your country, to our House."

"The people?" The Duke laughed. It was a shrill, disagreeable laugh. "The people are getting on quite well without me. The country seems pretty strong. And our House . . . well, what more do you expect me to do? Go back to that Sydenham woman and get bruised on her bones? No, Mama. I always wanted to drop politics and retire into private life. This is my chance. I'm through."

The Duchess trembled with excitement. Often enough Rudolph had had strange ideas, but never did she remember him so hard-headed as to-day. For a moment she wasn't able to get out a single word. The argument had lasted more than an hour, but the Duke was adamant.

"More than forty-five years you have trailed me along, Mama," he said slowly. The blood on his scratched cheek had dried into a dark crust. "You have ordered me about. You have even made me marry. But I've had enough. I'm through. If you want you can go back and try to hoist Kuno or Bruno on the throne; if they will leave America. But I have seen these Illyrians, and I won't do it."

Tears were in her eyes, as she realised that this time the break was final. "But what shall I do?" she cried, "What will you do?"

"Ah well, Mama," said the Duke, "you can go back to London or to our villa on the Riviera and have a nice private life. As far as I myself am concerned, I am going to have a private life too, without you. Just a life for myself, as I always wanted to have. As long as I'm dead, Valery will not claim me. That's enough to make me happy."

That was the last she got out of him. As the evening shadows lengthened, they saw a mule coming up the steep mountain path; the Duke put his hand behind his non-existent jacket edge and waited triumphantly for its arrival; like Napoleon at Jena. A victory, even if won late in life, is still a victory.

"And what are you going to do?" Igor asked Dr. Bruyl. They

sat together with Marguerite in the only room of the "Green Tree," the only pub in the village Sviata.

Bruyl took a dip into the rough mountain wine and massaged his elbow, which he had bruised during his landing. "I think I am going to stay here, my Igor," he said. "Didn't I tell you that I wished to return to my native Sviata? It was an omen which brought me here."

"But Illyria will miss you," said Marguerite, "Illyria will need people like you."

The old man smiled. "Don't you believe that, my girl," he said, "no man is irreplaceable. Nobody will need us. We have been abroad too long, and our people have found new leaders in their fight for freedom. Besides, if they really want us, they will be able to elect us again. As I see things now, our people are quite capable of managing their destiny by themselves. Why should I interfere?"

"And the others?" asked Igor.

"You just wait," said Bruyl gently, "for the others to speak up, I think that they have had their little experiences as well."

"Even Rudolph?" asked the girl. "If Mama will let him."

"Even the Duke," said Bruyl. "This will be the last straw. But what will you two do? Also stay incognito?"

"I am afraid we have to, if we want to marry," said Igor. "It wouldn't do much good to make a fuss."

"Exactly," said Dr. Bruyl. "But then you will go back to journalism. What about going back to your old paper, Igor? On the *Illyrian Freedom* you would again guard the newly won liberties of your people. We need people like you. Can you do it?"

"I thought of it," said Igor. "Yes, I will do it. There will be no difficulty. I will go there under my real name."

"Do you mean to tell me that 'Igor Duval' were merely a nom-de-plume?" laughed Dr. Bruyl, and Igor lifted his glass: "I am afraid so. Behind is just an ordinary citizen of Free Illyria. Now this is to you, Bruyl. May you stay a long time yet with us."

"This to our country," Bruyl lifted his glass, "and to all countries of the world who desire peace and freedom."

"This is to the future," said Marguerite. And the two men wondered whether she thought of Illyria or of her own fate. Possibly of both.

Late that night, when Dr. Bruyl was walking to the cottage which formerly belonged to his parents, where he succeeded in getting rooms on the first floor, he looked at the shining stars which stuck like drops

of silver dew on the deep firmament. The silhouettes of the mountains embraced the small village of Sviata like children handling toys. The storm had passed. The night was quiet. The narrow crescent of the moon was rising behind two fir-trees. Yes, Magdalen would come soon, and they would live here together.

He stopped in front of the cottage. The old verger, who lived here now, came to open the gate. "Excuse me, Sir," he said, "but I would like to know something. Your face seems familiar to me . . . I remember . . . I thought I did recall something . . . Excuse me, aren't you the Dr. Bruyl who went to London?"

Bruyl stopped in the uncertain light falling through the window. The black-out, too, had gone.

"I am afraid," he said gently, "that you are mistaken. That must be somebody else. Good night, my friend."

And with that he went to bed.

THE END

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